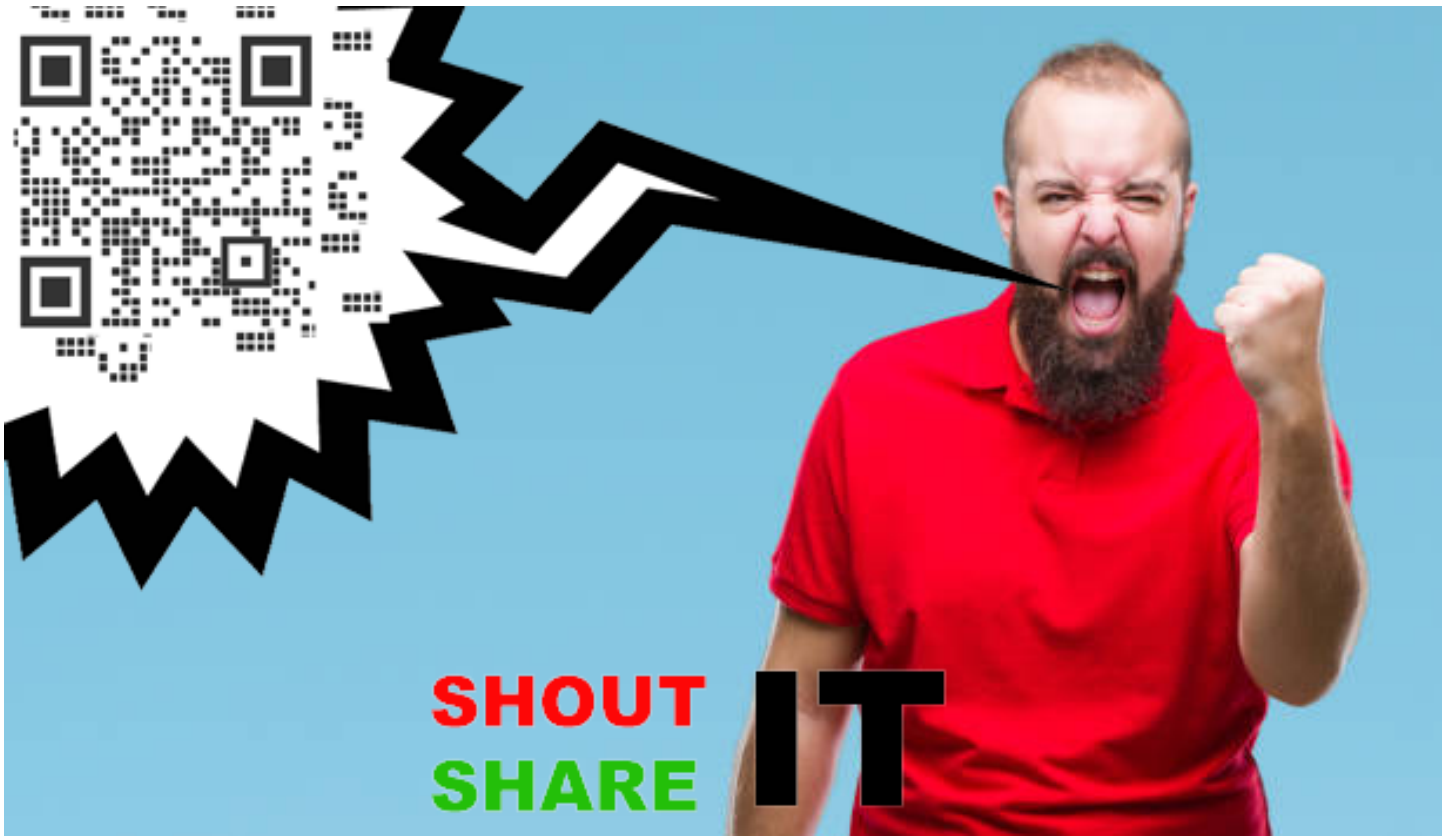
MICHAEL WILLIS

# The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual

## TEMPLES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GODS

CAMBRIDGE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# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF HINDU RITUAL

In this groundbreaking study, Michael Willis examines how the gods of early Hinduism came to be established in temples, how their cults were organised, and how the ruling elite supported their worship. Examining the emergence of these key historical developments in the fourth and fifth centuries, Willis combines Sanskrit textual evidence with archaeological data from inscriptions, sculptures, temples, and sacred sites. The centrepiece of this study is Udayagiri in central India, the only surviving imperial site of the Gupta dynasty. Through a judicious use of landscape archaeology and archaeo-astronomy, Willis reconstructs how Udayagiri was connected to the Festival of the Rainy Season and the Royal Consecration. Under Gupta patronage, these rituals were integrated into the cult of Viṣṇu, a deity regarded as the source of creation and of cosmic time. As special devotees to Viṣṇu, the Gupta kings used Udayagiri to advertise their unique devotional relationship with him. Willis shows, through his meticulous study of the site, its sculptures, and its inscriptions, how the Guptas presented themselves as universal sovereigns and how they advanced new systems of religious patronage that shaped the world of medieval India.

**Michael Willis** is curator of the early South Asian and Himalayan collections at the British Museum. A Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff University, he is the author of *The Temples of Gopakṣetra* and *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*.

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF HINDU RITUAL

## *Temples and the Establishment of the Gods*

**Michael Willis**

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*For Lucy*

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This book had its naissance in a catalogue of Indian temple sculpture at the British Museum. The collection, now available online, needed an introductory essay, and for this I had planned to explore how and when the people of India began to make religious images and install them in temples for worship. I soon discovered that these questions involved a bewildering range of historical and religious problems, many of them little studied. In addition, key sources, especially inscriptions, needed reexamination if our understanding of image worship in early Hinduism was going to be advanced in a substantive way. My ambition to do so was supported by the British Museum from the start, and I am indebted to the Trustees of the museum for providing an organisational framework in which innovative research of this kind is a priority.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *ABORI* | *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* |
| *ARE* | *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* |
| *AŚ* | *Arthaśāstra* |
| *ASIR* | *Archaeological Survey of India Reports* |
| *BDCRI* | *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* |
| *BEFEO* | *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-orient* |
| *BhG* | *Bhagavad Gītā* |
| BMC | British Museum Catalogue (refers to coin catalogue numbers) |
| *BS* | *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* |
| *BSOAS* | *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* |
| CII | Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum |
| *EI* | *Epigraphica Indica* |
| *EITA* | *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* |
| *E&W* | *East and West* |
| *IA* | *Indian Antiquary* |
| *IHQ* | *Indian Historical Quarterly* |
| *IIJ* | *Indo-Iranian Journal* |
| *IJHS* | *Indian Journal of History of Science* |
| *JAIH* | *Journal of Ancient Indian History* |
| *JAOS* | *Journal of the American Oriental Society* |
| *JASB* | *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* |
| *JBORS* | *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* |
| *JBRS* | *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* |
| *JESI* | *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* |
| *JIABS* | *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* |
| *JIP* | *Journal of Indian Philosophy* |
| *JNSI* | *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* |
| *JOR* | *Journal of Oriental Research* |
| *JRAS* | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| *JUPHS* | *Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society* |
| *KāśS* | *Kāśyapasaṃhitā* |
| *MASI* | *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* |
| *MBh* | *Mahābhārata* |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***MDh*** | *Mānavadharmaśāstra* |
| **Pkt** | Prakrit |
| ***SAS*** | *South Asian Studies* |
| **SBE** | Sacred Books of the East |
| **Skt** | Sanskrit |
| ***VaiSS*** | *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* |
| ***VDhP*** | *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* |
| **VS** | Vikrama Saṃvat |
| ***VSm*** | *Viṣṇusmṛti* |
| ***ZDMG*** | *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* |

# INTRODUCTION

kiṃ karma kim akarmeti kavayo'py atra mohitaḥ

What is ritual action? What is ritual inaction?
Even inspired sages are confused about that!

*Bhagavad Gītā* 4: 16

The large hill known as Udayagiri, not far from Vidiśā in central India, is a crucial site for the history of South Asia. Inscriptions at Udayagiri mention Candragupta II and Kumāragupta I, the foremost kings of the Gupta dynasty in late fourth and early fifth centuries CE.[1] These inscriptions have been known for more than a hundred years and have been featured frequently in political and cultural histories of India. Equally well-known, especially to historians of art and religion, are the sculptures of Viṣṇu and his several incarnations.[2] The amount of writing on this material since the nineteenth century might give the impression that little of substance remains to be tackled, but such an impression is unwarranted. To be precise, there are many things at Udayagiri awaiting discovery and publication: rock-shelters and petroglyphs, ruined buildings, inscriptions, water systems, fortifications, and habitation mounds. In addition to simple exploration and rudimentary documentation, a whole history of Udayagiri needs to be written, from the second century BCE, the date of the earliest monumental remains, to the eleventh century CE, the time when the Paramāra kings controlled central India and made their own additions to the site.[3] Even a glance at the earliest remains is enough to show that the site was important before the arrival of the Guptas.

These facts raise a number of important historical questions: Why did the Guptas come to Udayagiri? What compelled them to impose their religious and political identity on the site with such vigour and thoroughness? How did the

site operate under the Guptas in theological and ritual terms? It is my aim to tackle these questions in the pages of this book. In doing so I will not attempt to write an encyclopaedic "long history" of Udayagiri, at least not directly. Rather, I will look at those features that tell us how the site was understood and modified by the Guptas. In particular, I will focus on two special features: the natural passage that cuts through the lower part of the hill and the carved tableau of Viṣṇu in or near that passage (Figures 4, 5, 6 and 23). One of the images shows Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa during his period of cosmic sleep, the other Viṣṇu incarnate as the boar-headed Varāha. These parts of Udayagiri, contiguous and thematically related, provide enough material to elucidate two important topics for the history of India: (a) the archaeology and politics of time and (b) the establishment of early Hindu deities as juridical personalities. The first involves a reconstruction of the Indian methods of time-keeping and calendar-making, the ritual cycles that were built on this calendar, and the ways in which the early Guptas used this system to promote their vision of kingship and dominion. The second involves the legal and social justifications for the creation of permanent religious images, the ways these images came to be installed and worshipped in temples, and the mechanisms whereby temple gods were furnished with endowments for religious service. These are my themes in Chapters 1 and 2. The arguments in these chapters are self-contained but prompt important and directly related questions. In their simplest form, these questions may be phrased as follows: Who were the key religious leaders and ritual actors of Gupta times? And what was their role in shaping Gupta kingship? I have attempted to answer these questions in Chapter 3.

The exploration of these problems has taken me away from Udayagiri repeatedly, making this book a wide-ranging exploration of the fourth and fifth centuries rather than a site monograph in the traditional sense. In the end, however, I always found my way back: as the one imperial site that survives in a reasonably complete state, Udayagiri has provided the answers – or at least many of the answers – to my main historical questions. To help keep these questions clear in the minds of my readers, especially in light of the technical detail that needs to be addressed along the way, I would like to provide a summary of my key findings in the remaining pages of this introduction. This summary will also provide an opportunity to touch on the historical and theoretical implications of the present book.

That Udayagiri had a long history as a centre of astronomy and calendrical activity can be demonstrated archaeologically by the sculptures, inscriptions, and sundials cut into the rocks at the site. Solar observations are also suggested by the name, literally "sunrise-mountain." After Samudragupta conquered central India in the mid-fourth century, Udayagiri was modified in significant ways. It is my contention, fully argued in Chapter 1, that Udayagiri was

reworked under Candragupta II (*circa* CE 375–415) to articulate a revitalised form of early Hindu kingship in which the ruler was envisaged as a paramount sovereign (*cakravartin*) and supreme devotee of Viṣṇu (*paramabhāgavata*). As an astronomical centre, Udayagiri helped constitute these roles because Viṣṇu is, according to textual sources, the ruler and essence of time. This inspired Candragupta to transform Udayagiri from a simple place of celestial observation into an astro-political node where the movements of the heavenly bodies were conflated with his political path and personal splendour. This ambition was achieved ritually through the *rājasūya* or royal consecration, one of the ancient Soma sacrifices. Through various ritual idioms, this performance captured the power of the celestial bodies, and thus time, in the unction fluid and transferred this power to the body of the king. This is why Candragupta (and some of his successors) came to be titled *vikramāditya*, "he who is the sun of prowess."

As I struggled to develop this historical understanding, I was obliged to draw on a number of fields: epigraphy, iconology, historical astronomy, ethnography, landscape archaeology. I combined these with text-based Indology and religious studies. This approach – eclectic but not, I hope, eccentric – led me to breach disciplinary protocols and to create what I have termed the "archaeology of ritual." Whatever theoretical bells these words might ring, this is not a project in the tradition of Michel Foucault or Ian Hodder.[4] Rather, it represents my own effort to inject a measure of dynamism into the static, desk-bound forms of analysis that have so far governed the study of Indian inscriptions, sculpture, built environment, and landscape. Sanskrit texts have not been spared in this exercise. Detached from Indological praxis, in which texts are studied in relation to each other and set in textually defined hierarchies and typological sequences, I have tried to place literary sources "on the ground" in actual places and specific religious, political, and ritual contexts. Udayagiri was the crucible in which I forged this method and it was from Udayagiri that I have taken it across early Hindu India.

The performance of the *rājasūya* and its memorialisation at Udayagiri was the means through which Candragupta II was transformed into a king worthy of the name. This laid the foundation for his validating campaign of world conquest, a success that was celebrated in inscriptions, including those at Udayagiri. Through the medium of sculpture, the king also articulated his close relationship with Viṣṇu, especially Varāha, the incarnation connected with the salvation of the earth. By claiming devotional proximity to Viṣṇu as the god's supreme devotee or *paramabhāgavata*, Candragupta was claiming a special relationship with the god who had saved the earth and was in ontological possession of it. This allowed the king to be called, among other things, the "Lord of the Earth" (*bhūpati*) and to advance the claim that the whole earth belonged to the crown. Kings could, for these reasons, redefine land tenure and property relations. This buttressed the

system of rural development through land-grants to priests and temples, a system that enjoyed unprecedented encouragement in Gupta times. These issues and their implications are explored in Chapter 2.

While the working assumptions of the land-tenure system necessarily rest in the minutiae of the charters and corresponding rules in surviving legal texts, two historiographical problems can be addressed here: (a) royal legitimacy and (b) the constitution of the early Hindu state. Legitimacy is an issue that has concerned many historians of South Asia over the last fifty years. In a recent volume, Sheldon Pollock has captured the general disillusionment of academics with legitimation theory and rejected the notion that royal inscriptions and Sanskrit literature were written to legitimate royal power.[5] Nonetheless, Pollock is prepared to admit that poetry (*kāvya*) and power (*rājya*) were mutually constitutive, even if the relationship presents "interpretive challenges."[6] What Pollock advocates is that the autonomous aesthetic of literary Sanskrit was not just one type of political language, but the overarching political language of South Asia par excellence. The study of aesthetics becomes, in this view, the study of power, even if a simple causal relationship did not exist between the two.

Those who read Sanskrit and approach pre-modern India through literary texts will naturally give primacy to literary texts. The risk for historical studies is that in subject areas where literary texts are the only evidence, or taken as the only evidence worth reading, such an approach will encourage, in Edwin Gerow's incisive words, "an overconfident cultural narcissism."[7] Narcissism or not, the most obvious factual difficulty is that in the period when Sanskrit emerged as the dominant language of discourse, that is the Gupta period, literary texts are certainly *not* the only evidence. In this book, as a consequence, I have advocated that texts be detached from established academic tropes and placed "on the ground" with other datasets. I have already made this point in a general way. How the method can work in practice is shown in section 1.5 where the inscription in Cave 8 at Udayagiri is examined. This inscription, composed in *anuṣṭubh* verse, praises Candragupta II and records the creation of a cave-shrine by his minister. The text can appear self-contained and has the potential to yield proper sense when published in the pages of a book. Although I do seek to denigrate the importance of publishing critical editions of epigraphic records in the traditional way, my argument is that the political and social implications of the Cave 8 inscription cannot be understood unless we take it out of the books in which it has been printed and back to the place where it was first inscribed. This situates the text in the ritual landscape for which it was written and juxtaposes it with the religious images that were made to amplify the text's political and cultural meanings. There can be no doubt that the text of the Cave 8 inscription enjoyed a high place in the hierarchy of cultural products at Udayagiri – it was, after all, composed by the king's

minister. However, if we allow ourselves to consider the text as an autonomous literary work detached from its surroundings, we simply perpetuate the nineteenth-century divide between literary, epigraphic, iconographic, theological, and archaeological knowledge. In this book, I aim to reconsider the wider archaeological context of inscriptions and combine this with relevant evidence from legal, liturgical, and religious sources – not just literary ones.[8] I have been inspired to pursue this method because, as Ronald Inden has argued, conditions in historic India were not fixed. The transcendent truth may have been seen as immutable, but everyday political and religious relations were subject to constant transformation and recreation, a situation that was understood well by people living in those times.[9] I am inclined to think, for these reasons, that totalising theorisations about South and South East Asia over more than a millennium have little or no explanatory power. These grand narratives gives us neither the tools for understanding new kinds of data nor the models for reinterpreting and synthesising that which is already known.[10] This methodological conclusion prepares us to return to the general problem of legitimacy. When we juxtapose the doubts raised about legitimacy as an explanatory device with the detailed assessment of Udayagiri as the locus of imperial ritual in the early fifth century, there can be little doubt that the Guptas used Sanskrit inscriptions, texts, and rituals to confer authority, nobility, and sublime qualities on themselves and their subordinates – in other words, to give themselves legitimacy. I hasten to add that my argument does not represent a simple reactivation of legitimation theory as an intellectual project. Rather, the sources have compelled me to explore the evolving debates that surrounded kingship in the fourth and fifth centuries and the rich matrix of constitutive and distributive acts through which the Guptas, Vākāṭakas, and their subordinates controlled their ritual polity and negotiated its relationship with ecology and the means and relations of production.

Closely related to legitimacy are questions about state formation and the degree to which the Guptas and their successors ruled a unified political entity or bureaucratic regime. The historiography is well developed, and there is ongoing debate about the models and terminology. A useful point of entry into the problem is a recent book by Fred Virkus.[11] Based on a critical survey of the epigraphic evidence, Virkus has suggested that the Gupta kingdom was essentially fragmented, subordinate rulers being independent yet contained politically because they controlled small geographical areas. The significance of the Guptas, and their so-called golden age, certainly appears to lose its lustre if we simply plot epigraphic and numismatic find-spots on a map.[12] However, the geographical distribution of data, and the family affiliation of particular inscriptions, needs to be read against the actual content of the records. As noted in Chapter 2, the Sanskrit imprecations given in the charters, and the organisation of information otherwise, indicate that land-tenure across India was

informed by shared ideas and common practices. It is especially remarkable that the wording of the imprecations varies little from northern Bengal to the Deccan and Tamil Nadu, an area even larger than that controlled by the Guptas, Vākāṭakas, and their tributaries. The implications of this are clear and important: quite apart from the territories controlled by individual kings and particular families, there was an effective legal system across most of India by the early fifth century and transactions involving land were conducted according to it. And the transactions, lest we forget, were conducted in the Sanskrit language. In addition to this juridical unity (and the cadres of specialists in *dharma* it documents), religious and ritual systems prevailed over wide areas with the knowledge of the particulars conducted and transmitted by individuals learned in Sanskrit. If we follow Nicholas Dirks and hold that religion and ritual structured a unified polity rather than simply reflecting it, then contra Virkus and others, religious and ritual conformity means, in essence, political unity.[13] These and other considerations have led me to accept Inden's model of "imperial formation" as a standard for organising the competing and contradictory claims made in the epigraphic corpus and for understanding the hierarchical constitution of India in the fourth and fifth centuries.[14] The idea of a "circle of kings" found in Indian manuals on statecraft is especially useful for explaining how a plurality of lordships was coordinated to create an ideologically coherent polity. The legal network just mentioned finds a place in this model, and even dissenting political and ritual views could be accommodated, as shown in Chapter 3.

Leaving these theoretical concerns and returning to the question of land, gifts to brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda were sanctioned by tradition, so formalised land-grants were not seen as contentious when they were introduced in the fourth century. Grants to temples, however, were fraught. This was because temple deities were not regarded as "real" by the Vedic priesthood. This powerful circle of orthodox specialists were responsible for royal sacrifices, including the *rājasūya*, and they were prepared to sanction only those rituals and theologies that conformed to and confirmed the ancient Vedic way of doing and thinking. Their objection was that temple gods were not sentient beings and that they were not, as a result, able or entitled to accept what was offered to them. In other words, they were not juridical personalities with rights to offerings and gifts of land and money. To meet these objections, grants were sometimes held by trustees and priests. Simultaneously, the legitimacy of image worship was asserted by transferring Vedic rituals from the domestic setting to the temple environment. As explained in Section 2.6, the argument in favour of temple *pūjā* was carried forward by analogy and appropriation: just as important guests were traditionally welcomed in well-to-do homes and offered things that pleased them, so too were the gods welcomed in temple-homes and offered things that pleased them. This, if nothing else, settles the origin of *pūjā*.

From the mid-fourth century, kings granted land to two types of institutions: (a) tax-free estates held by brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda and (b) tax-free estates held by or for temple gods and run for the benefit and worship of those gods. The first was termed *agrahāra*; the second, *devāgrahāra*. The workings of these institutions, with examples, are given in Chapter 2. The charters making the grants were composed in Sanskrit, the implication being that Sanskrit learning was sustained and advanced in landed estates. The way large numbers of brāhmaṇas were sometimes settled together means that substantial estates for learned men were being established. These were, in effect, "Sanskrit colleges" with many – sometimes hundreds – of pundits. The find-spots of the charters show that these places were in the hinterland (i.e., away from the court or the royal camps whence charters were normally issued). This has some bearing on Pollock's theories about the "Sanskrit cosmopolis" and the historic use of the language. His stated aim was "to capture *practices* and then ask what sort of social explanation – discourse of power or whatever – may account for these practices."[15] Despite this ambition, the understanding offered is formal and linguistic with no account of actual institutions (i.e., *agrahāra*, *devāgrahāra*), actual places (i.e., documented geographical locations), or actual applications of Sanskrit knowledge in particular settings (i.e., legal codes used in specific courts, Bhāgavata texts applied as a living theology at specific times among specific groups, etc.).[16] The historical career of Sanskrit, in Pollock's view, is that it "only slowly and reluctantly . . . emerges as a political language . . . from the sacerdotal environment in which it was most at home."[17] This is nothing more than the old division of church and state in fancy dress, transmuted by academic discourse into a polarity between fine art or literature and the workaday world of popular culture. Modern people may choose to organise their thinking along these lines, but the question for historians is whether the Guptas and their contemporaries actually did so. Little can be safely concluded about early Indian history, but given that almost every record in the epigraphic corpus is concerned with the establishment of temples, the record of religious acts, or the provision of religious endowments, any attempt to divide politics, property, religion, and ritual can be rejected as wholly misguided. One example proves the point at the very beginning of the history of Sanskrit as a public and political language: the fourth-century Valkhā charter given in Section 1.11. In this charter, *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa uses elements of Sanskrit verse to proclaim his devotion to Viṣṇu, his subordination to and participation in the royal cult of his Gupta overlords, and his readiness to assign land for the maintenance of worship in a temple.

People in early India, like all people I suppose, believed in the constitutive power of the act. Competing hermeneutics normally focused on the nature and implication of various acts, ritual or otherwise. Moreover, it is a simple fact of the Sanskrit language that the word *karma* refers to all kinds of acts, even

grammatical ones.[18] In Gupta times, image worship was developed and confirmed as a valid act by the appropriation of time-honoured elements from the Vedic tradition, as just noted. Simultaneously, the Vedic sacrifices – the mighty acts of antiquity including the *rājasūya* – were reconceived and renovated in theistic terms. This was made possible through an elaborate series of homologies centred on time. The organisation of time, and of the Indian calendar and ritual cycle, were determined by solar, lunar, and stellar observations. At Udayagiri, to come back to our imperial site, the necessary observations were facilitated by the geographical features of the hill, features that were modified and supplemented in the Gupta period to enhance and symbolically enrich the observations. In the field of speculative thought, correspondences were built between the calendar and the rituals organised by that calendar. The year, therefore, was the royal consecration – because the consecration took a year to perform – and the year was the sacrificial horse – because a horse was the central offering in the yearlong horse sacrifice that confirmed the king's paramount status as *cakravartin*. The year was also Viṣṇu because he was seen as the essence of time and, according to ancient lore, absorbed the sacrifice, and thus the year, into his body. The year was also the firm foundation of created things – all life exists in time and is conditioned by it. As a place where time was known and the year made, Udayagiri became a natural site for visualising and memorialising time and the sacrifice, and so also Viṣṇu, the theistic embodiment of both. This is how the mountain became a sacred landscape in every sense, a place where knowledgeable pilgrims directly encountered time and the living god who embodied it. Udayagiri is, for these reasons, a key node in the history of Indian religious thought because it stands on the cusp between the sacrifices sanctioned by the Veda and the theistic modes of worship and devotion advocated in early Hinduism. These modes of worship were conducted in temples whose inhabitants were accepted as permanent juridical personalities. This explains why temples made of permanent materials were built in significant numbers only from the early years of the fifth century.

The complex theology of early Hinduism and its formal architecture did not emerge in a subconscious or organic fashion from some kind of socio-religious plasma. It was rather created and made possible by the priesthood. Priests not only developed the ideas and wrote the texts, they created and enacted the rituals that constituted these realities. As ritual authors and actors, the individual priests of the fourth and fifth centuries are not usually known by name. Nonetheless, their roles and responsibilities can be reconstructed from texts and inscriptions. My argument, set out in Chapter 3, is that a spiritual triumvirate dominated the Gupta court: the royal chaplain (*purohita*), the cadre of sacrificial priests (*ṛtvij*), and the spiritual guide (*ācārya*). Each controlled a discrete domain of sacred knowledge and played a part in the constitution of the king's religious and political identity. I suspect that this analysis will be

greeted with utter dismay by those who have struggled to dismantle the Orientalist picture of India as ridden by priests, overtaken with superstition, and enthralled to religion. Against this, however, is Inden's attempt to show how "human agency" can be restored to the people of India's villages and towns, that is, how the Indians themselves ordered their world.[19] The historian is simply not in a position to judge if he or she uncovers a world structured by agents that some find unacceptable or unpalatable. The rich political and cultural dynamics that are unlocked once we accept the idea of agency in Indian history is well illustrated by James Heitzman's *Gifts of Power*, a book of such innovation and creative scholarship that its lessons are being assimilated but slowly.[20]

As the writing of this book progressed, I began to reconsider my wider subject and think about how historians have approached the visual and textual cultures of pre-modern India. The normal and apparently natural view, unconsciously or consciously informed by secularism and structuralism, is that socio-cultural products – including religion – reflect or express more basic relationships of an economic and political nature. It should be clear from what has been said in this introduction that I cannot believe this dogma anymore. Since the emergence of religious states in the second half of the twentieth century, there is sufficient modern evidence to show that this explanatory framework has to be turned on its head. Historically speaking, the Gupta age shows that the explanation of religion as a kind of decorative cultural accessory, at best, and an embarrassing relic of *pensée sauvage*, at worst, will not serve. The Vaiṣṇava faith and the religious institutions described in this book were dynamic historical forces, driven forward by historically knowable agents with clear motives and certain purposes. These agents – kings, priests, and their clients – leave no doubt whatever that religious ideology and religious institutions structured the political and economic relationships of the Gupta age rather than vice versa. The detailed proof of this lies in the pages that follow.

ONE

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICS OF TIME AT UDAYAGIRI

ādityāj jāyate vṛṣṭir vṛṣṭer annaṃ tataḥ prajāḥ
From the sun comes rain, from rain comes food,
wherefrom come living creatures.

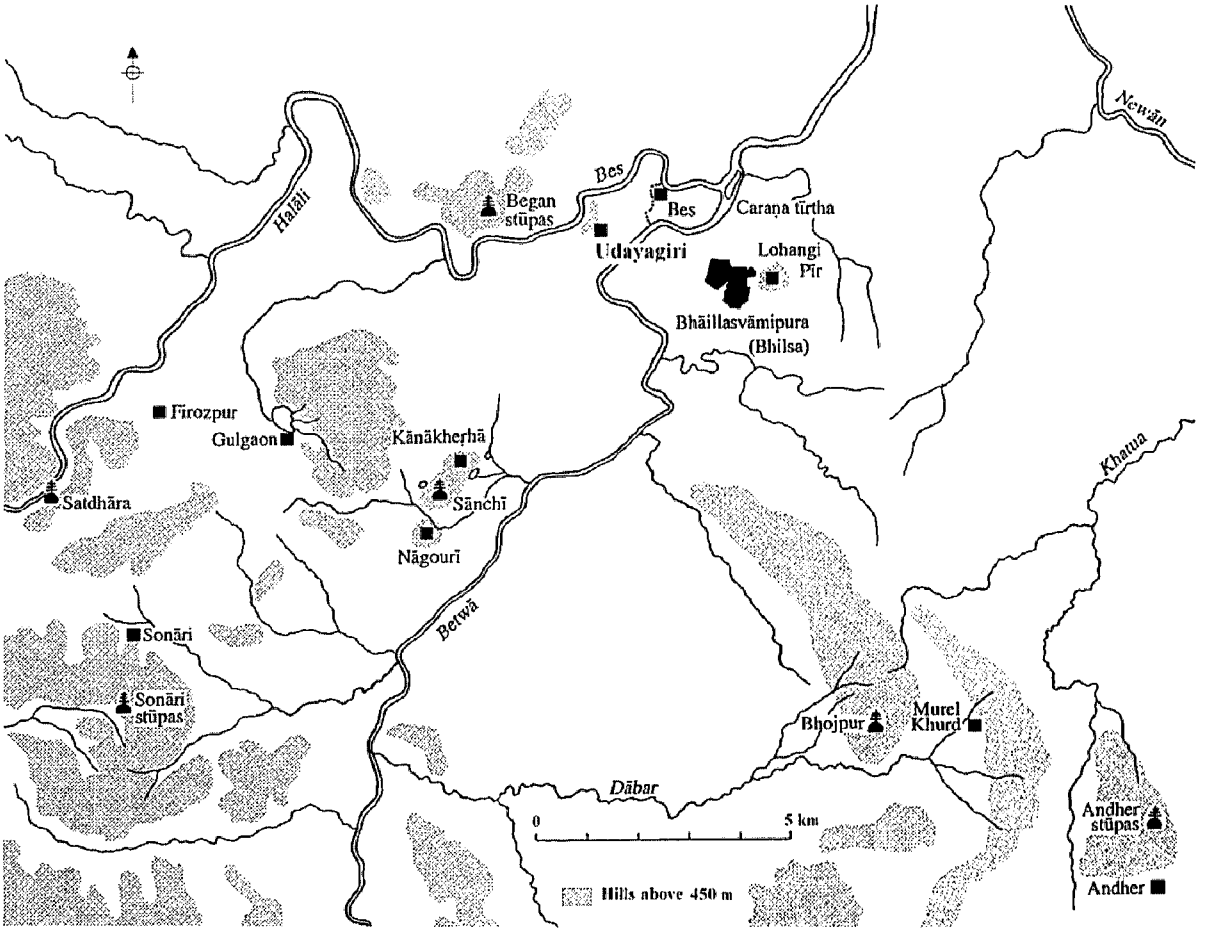
Manu[1]

Near the ancient city of Vidiśā in central India, just west of the old earthen ramparts, is a rocky hill known as Udayagiri – "the mountain of the sunrise" (Figures 1 and 2). The hill is U-shaped and consists of two plateaux joined in the middle by a low ridge (Figure 3). The northern plateau has steep cliffs on three sides and is flanked by the river Bes; it was once edged by strong walls and crowned by a great temple, now in ruins. The southern plateau has no surviving buildings apart from a single cave shrine. The low ridge linking the two hills is less dramatic in topographical terms, but is rich in archaeological, sculptural, and epigraphic material. It is this ridge that is the primary focus of the present chapter.

Combining an account of the physical remains on the ridge with relevant Sanskrit texts and inscriptions, my aim here is to show how this part of the site functioned as a centre of imperial ritual under the early Gupta kings. My key findings, to anticipate in summary form what follows, are that Udayagiri had a long history as a centre of time-keeping, and this made it an ideal location for (a) scheduling and memorialising the royal consecration or *rājasūya*, most notably of king Candragupta II, and for (b) celebrating the rainy season observance or *varṣāmāsavrata* during which the god Viṣṇu is "put to sleep" during the Monsoon. This festival had its naissance in the Gupta court and enjoyed their special patronage because the Guptas were ardent followers of the Vaiṣṇava dispensation to which the festival belonged.

1 India. Map showing key sites of the fourth and fifth centuries.

In developing this understanding of Udayagiri, I will describe and analyse many archaeological details at the site. This focused account is essential for recovering and understanding the rituals that were celebrated. These rituals helped constitute Gupta kingship and the socio-religious culture of the Gupta age. More directly, the rituals inspired the composition of poetic inscriptions,

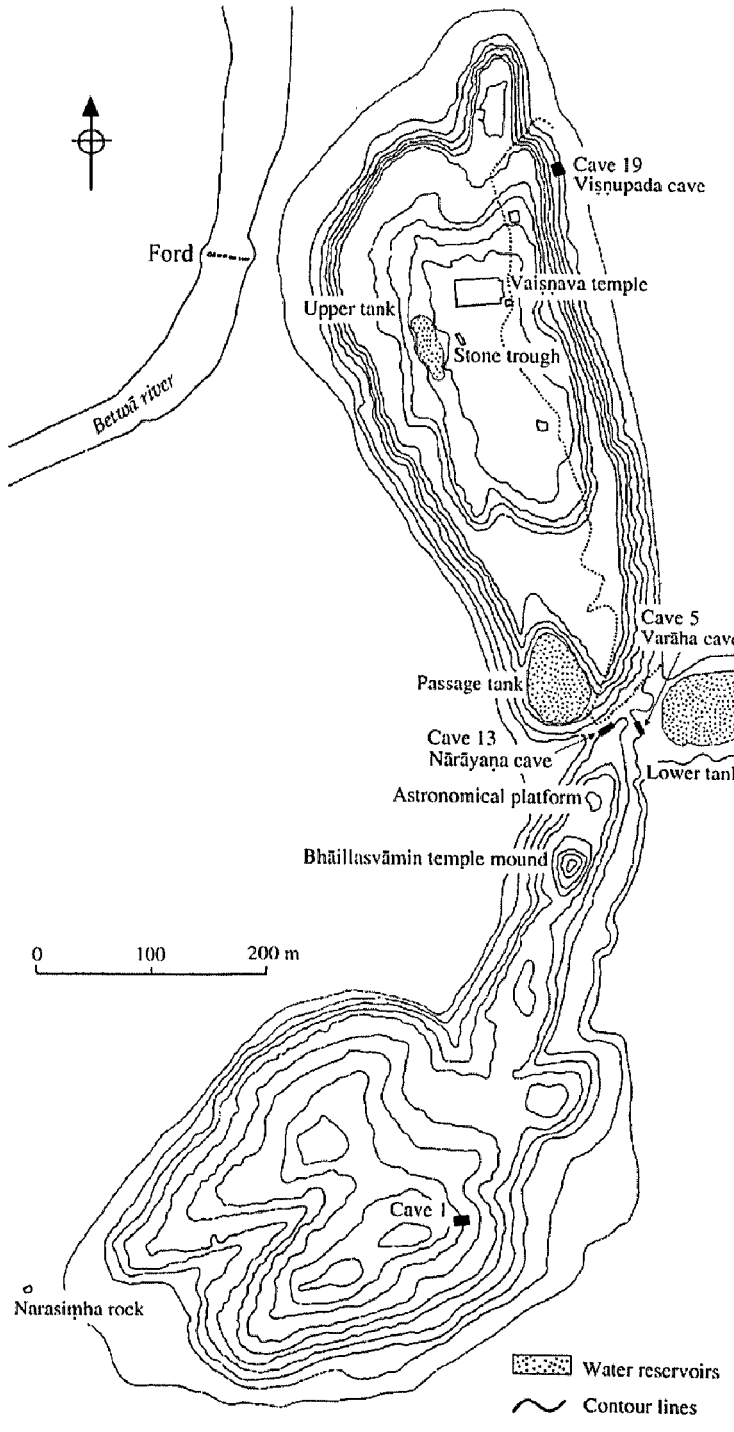



2 Vidiśā region. Map showing location of Udayagiri and main historical sites in the neighborhood.

the creation of monumental images, and the manipulation of the landscape and its hydrology. These changes made Udayagiri the preeminent sacred place of early Hindu India.

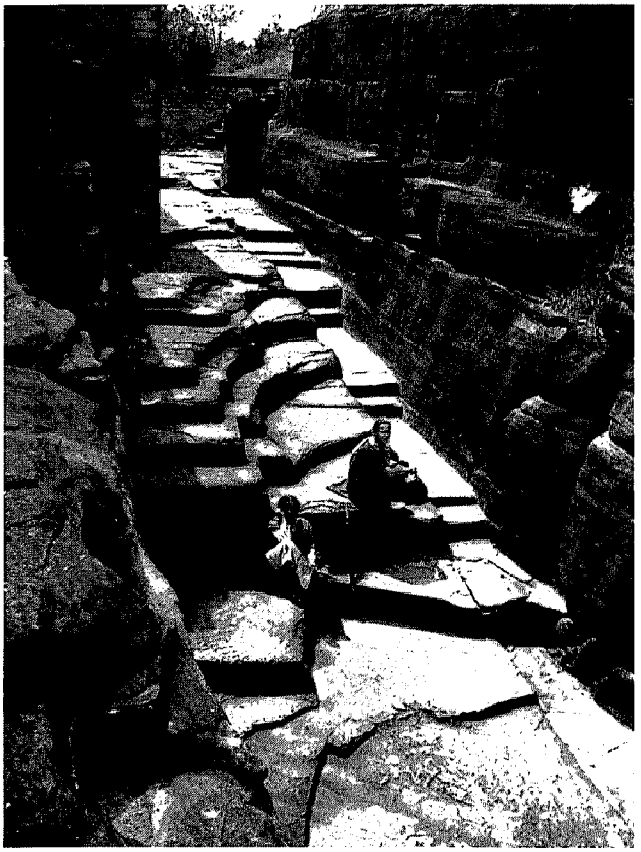
## 1.1. CENTRAL RIDGE AND PASSAGE

There is a remarkable concentration of material in and around the central ridge at Udayagiri: a series of caves, niches, inscriptions, rock-cut sculptures, assorted water-features, and a large mound marking the site of an old temple (Figure 3). Especially notable is the narrow defile or passage at the northern end of the ridge (Figure 4). This passage – a natural cleft in the rock – has been subject to a host of modifications and additions. The largest and most important is an image of Lord Viṣṇu sleeping on the serpent Ananta (Figure 5).[2] We will return to this sculpture and its iconography in detail later. Other notable features include the steps that have been cut into the passage floor. There are, in fact, several sets of steps placed side-by-side at different levels. This curious disposition is explained by the fact that the lower steps on the north side were not originally

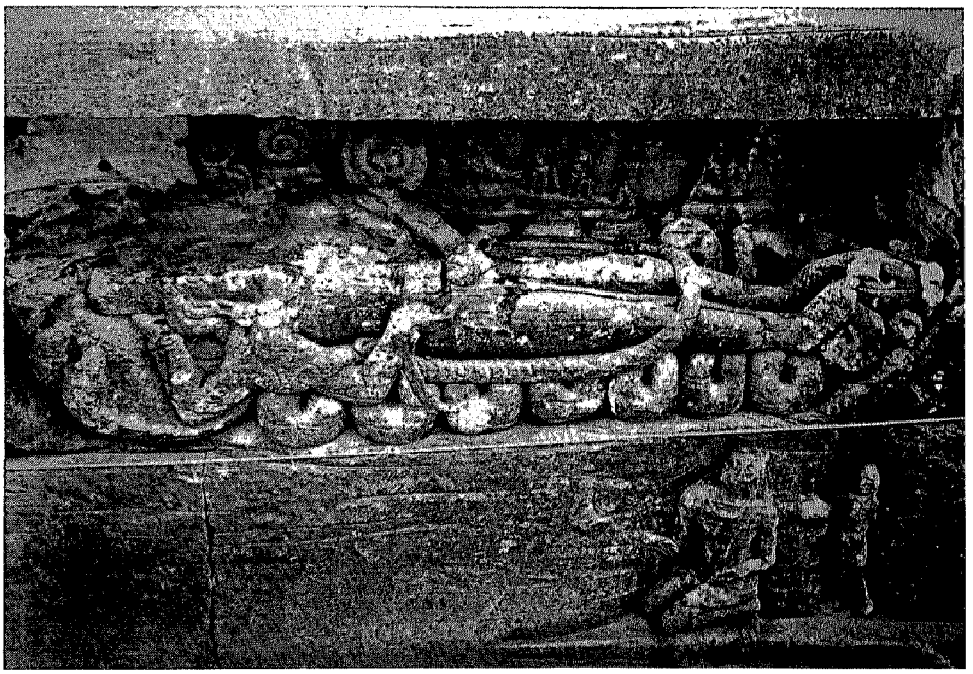



3 Udayagiri. Map showing key features of the site.

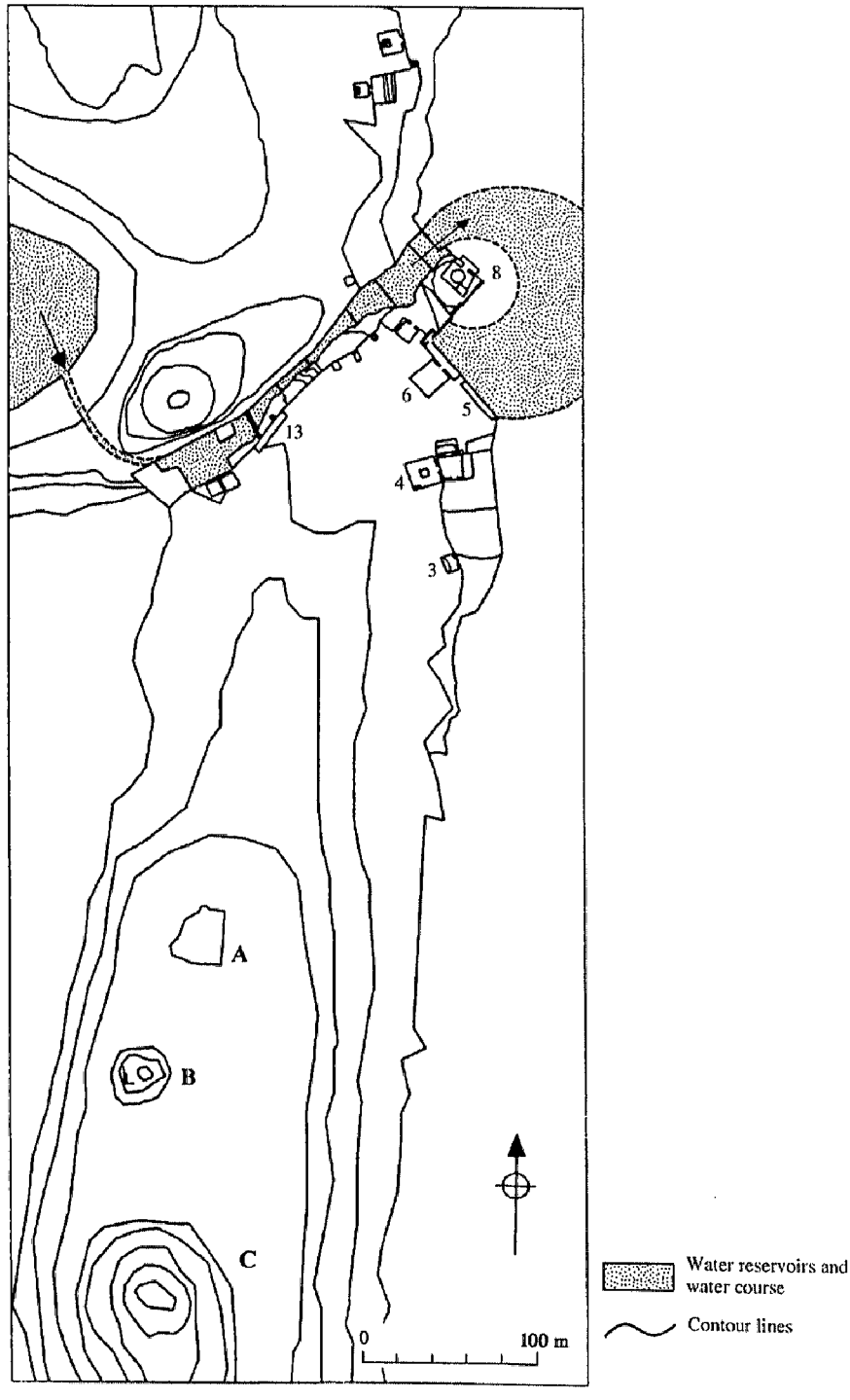
intended as steps at all. The rock surface is visibly water-worn over the whole surface, indicating that these steps functioned as a water-cascade. The water for the cascade was evidently brought from a large tank at the head of the passage (Figure 6). The precise channel through which water entered the cascade from the tank has been obscured by time, but traces of rock-cut channels can be seen at the top of the passage. Remains of pipes and water-lifting devices may lie



4 Udayagiri. Central passage viewed from the east.



5 Udayagiri. Cave 13, recumbent figure of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa, fifth century, as photographed in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the British Library.*




6 Udayagiri. Map of the central ridge. *Important caves are shown with their standard numbers; Cave 5 contains Varāha, Cave 13 contains Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa. A = rock-cut astronomical dais; B = foundations of platform; C = Bhāillasvāmin temple mound.*

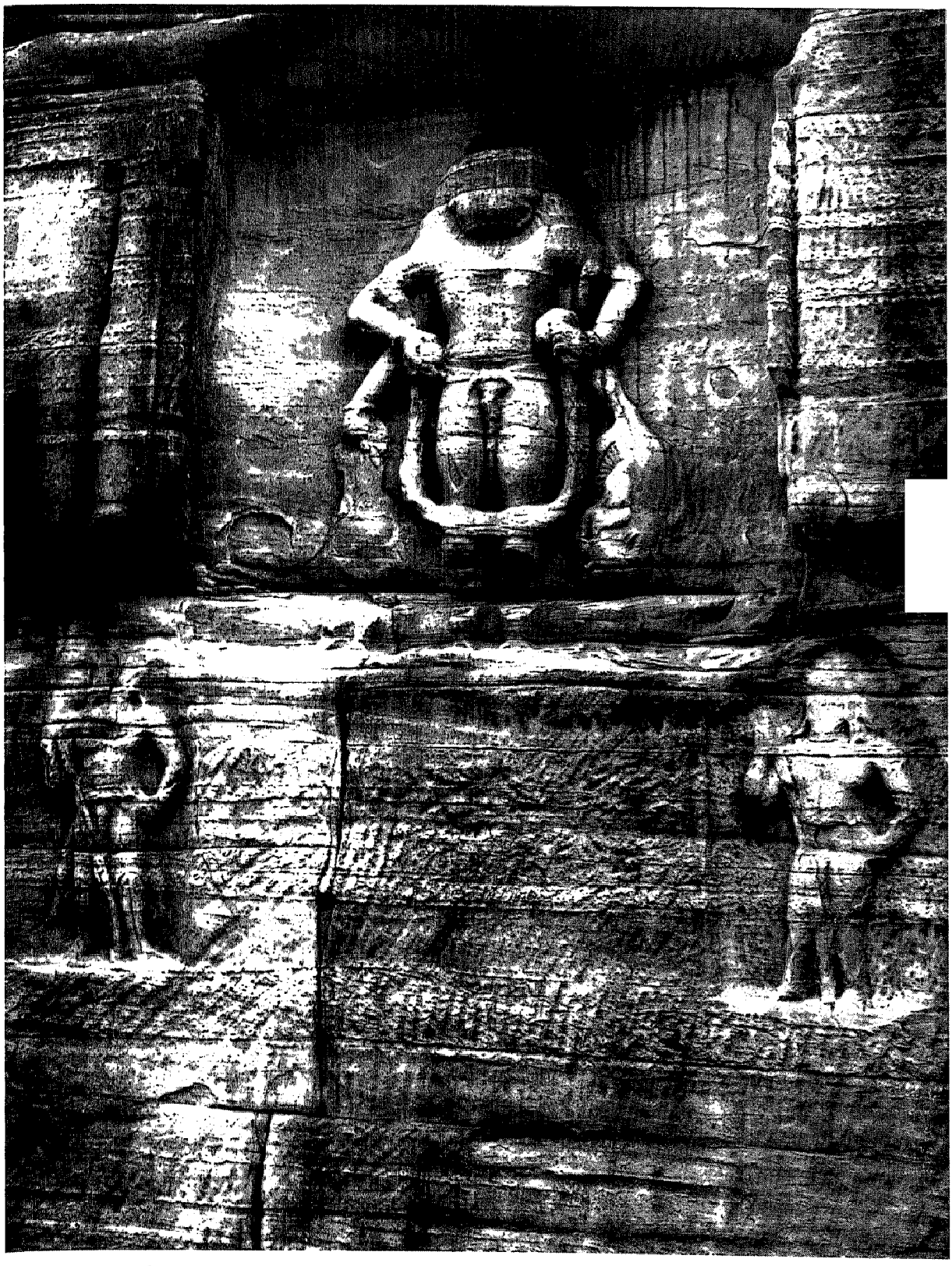
beneath the large mound that stands above the north side of the passage (Figure 6, opposite Cave 13).

Above the steps, the walls of the passage are very steep – almost vertical in places – and exhibit a number of remarkable features. The south face has been carved with a number of niches and cave-shrines. Indeed, the whole surface has

7 Udayagiri. Central passage wall, south side, showing so-called shell inscriptions. *The shell inscriptions were partially cut away when the stepped profile of the passage wall was created in the fifth century so the sun would strike the image in Figure 6 at the summer solstice.*

been heavily modified and there is hardly any place where the original rock has not been worked in some fashion (Figures 7 and 8). In addition to the images, there are a host of "shell inscriptions," so called by modern historians on account of their shell-like appearance. Some are several metres high and as such are the largest examples known in India.[3] These seem to be superimposed at several points, indicating the inscriptions were engraved over a long period of time. That they predate the fifth century CE is shown by the Gupta-period images that cut directly through the inscriptions, obliterating them in part (Figure 7).[4] Additionally, some of the larger flourishes and long tails of the letters were lost when the upper walls of the passage were squared off and otherwise modified.

The north wall of the passage, unlike the south, is relatively untouched. Only one niche with a small female figure, probably Gaṅgā, has been introduced. There are a few notches for pillars and beams (now missing), and the rock has been slightly trimmed opposite the large image of recumbent Viṣṇu. Shell inscriptions are also few in number. They are found on the cliff-face only at the extreme eastern and western ends of the passage. This general lack of features suggests that the north face had some special significance that precluded modification. Even in the Gupta period, when virtually everything was reworked in some way, few changes were made. This diffidence about the natural rock is especially remarkable because the south side of most Indian monuments is the normal focus of sculptural embellishment. This is because the



8 Udayagiri. Central passage, south wall, Narasiṃha and attendant figures, fifth century.

9 Udayagiri. Lion capital, fifth century, as photographed in situ in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the British Library.*

southern aspect is exposed to direct sun and shows carved detail to good effect. Udayagiri is very different. The rock exposed to the sun has been left untouched, while the images and inscriptions have been placed in areas that are normally in the shade. This very peculiar situation can be explained, in my view, by the use of the passage walls as sight-lines for astronomical observation. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to recover these ancient observations and to show that the large image of recumbent Viṣṇu was positioned so it would be hit by the sun's rays at key moments in the Vaiṣṇava ritual cycle.

These ideas first emerged in discussions with Dr Meera I. Dass with whom I have studied Udayagiri and coauthored publications on aspects of the site.[5] I was encouraged to pursue this line of investigation by a number of features of an astronomical nature, notably a sundial engraved on the rock near the entrance to Cave 20. In addition, there are the well-known zodiacal figures (*rāśi*) on the lion capital from Udayagiri (Figure 9). A broken stone slab with astronomical images on a lotus petal was also found on the site (Figure 10).[6] Of course the very name – "the mountain of the sunrise" – also suggests that Udayagiri was a place of solar importance.

## 1.2. SYNOPSIS OF ASTRONOMICAL PHENOMENA

To determine how Udayagiri worked as an astronomical site, and to recover some of the observations that may have been made there, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the solar and lunar phenomena that were the basis of the early Indian system of time-keeping.[7] The two solstices are a convenient and logical starting point. These events are determined by the position of the rising sun at different times of year. The summer solstice, firstly, occurs in late June and is the longest day of the year. As we shall see at various points in this chapter, this is a particularly important day for understanding Udayagiri. The winter solstice, which occurs six months after the summer solstice, is the shortest day of the year. This falls toward the end of December. On the equinoxes – also six months apart – the day and night are equal in length. The vernal equinox occurs in late March and the autumnal equinox in late September. This scheme divides the year into four quarters, each with 90 days to make a total of 360 days over twelve months. This basic calendar appears very early in India. Some hints of it are found in the Vedic hymns and the whole system is laid out in the *Jyotiṣavedāṅga*, the oldest surviving astronomical treatise.[8] The key point for our purpose is that the year was divided into four parts based on solar observations.

From the point of view of the terrestrial observer – in early India as well as today – the solstices and equinoxes are linked to the position of the rising sun on the eastern horizon. The basic observations are shown here in Figure 11. In the northern hemisphere, as most people are aware, the sun gets lower and lower in the sky as winter closes in. With each passing day, the sun also appears to rise more toward the south until the winter solstice in December. After this, the sun reverses its course and appears, day by day, to rise more towards the north. It reaches its northern-most point on the summer solstice in June. These two movements of the sun, shown here in Figure 12, were recognised in Gupta times and called *dakṣiṇāyana* ("the southern progress") and *uttarāyaṇa* ("the northern progress"). These movements were also linked to the seasons, six in number according to the old Indian reckoning: the spring, summer, and rains were the "seasons of the gods" when the sun moves northward; the autumn, winter, and "dews" (*śiśira*) were the "seasons of the fathers" when the sun moves southward. Because there are six seasons, ritual texts like the *Aitreyabrāhmaṇa* could say that by uttering the word *six* one arranges (*kalayati*) and establishes (*pratiṣṭhāpayati*) the seasons.[9] For the sake of clarity, the seasons and corresponding months are shown here in tabular form (see Table 1).

## 1.3. APPLICATION TO UDAYAGIRI

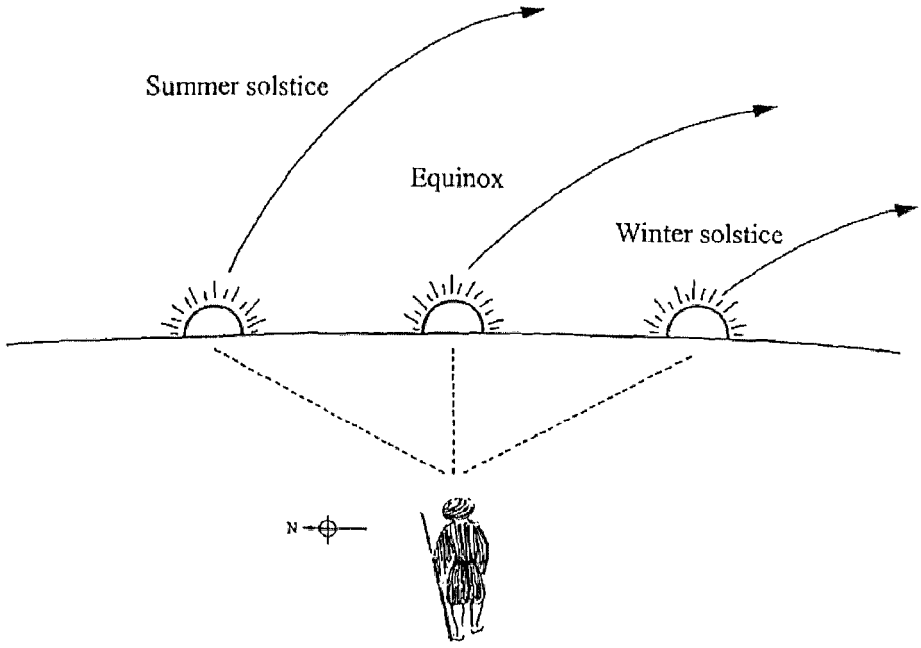
Even though the core features of this astronomy are unproblematic, the question before us is whether they can be applied to Udayagiri in a meaningful

Table 1. *Seasons and Months of the Year with Corresponding Solar Events (Approximately Placed)*

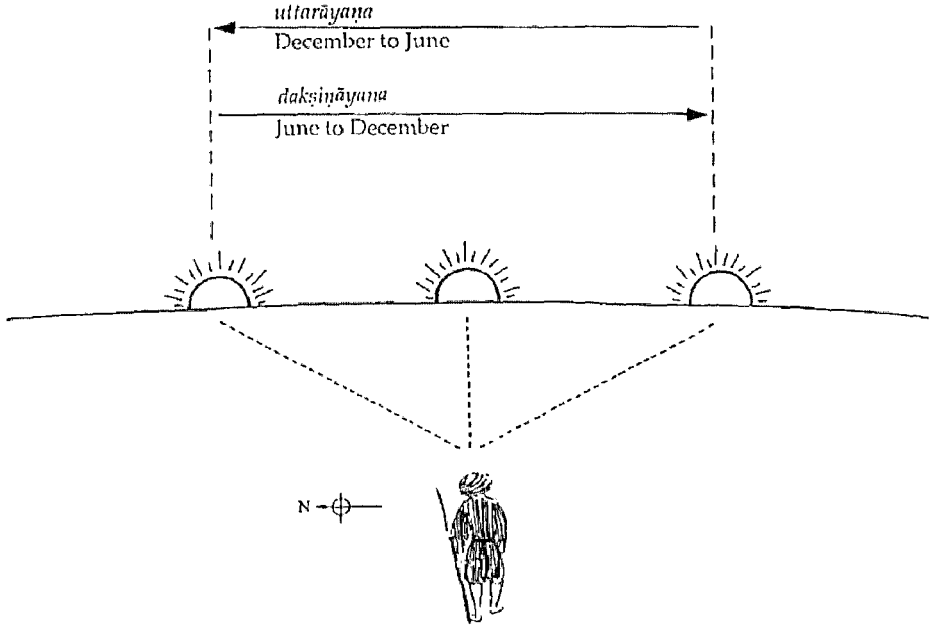
| Season | Solar Month | Lunar Month | Solar Event |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vasanta (spring) | Madhu | Caitra (Mar–Apr) | Vernal equinox |
| | Mādhava | Vaiśākha (Apr–May) | |
| Grīṣma (summer) | Śukra | Jyeṣṭha (May–June) | |
| | Śuci | Āṣāḍha (June–July) | Summer solstice |
| Varṣa (rains) | Nabha | Śrāvaṇa (July–Aug) | Dakṣiṇāyana begins |
| | Nabhasya | Bhādrapada (Aug–Sept) | |
| Śarat (autumn) | Iṣa | Āśvina (Sept–Oct) | Autumnal equinox |
| | Ūrja | Kārttika (Oct–Nov) | |
| Hemanta (winter) | Saha | Mārgaśīrṣa (Nov–Dec) | |
| | Sahasya | Pauṣa (Dec–Jan) | Winter solstice |
| Śiśira (dews) | Tapa | Māgha (Jan–Feb) | Uttarāyaṇa begins |
| | Tapasya | Phālguna (Feb–Mar) | |

10 Udayagiri. Lotus slab with astronomical symbols, fifth century, as photographed in situ in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the British Library.*

fashion. In order to explore the relationship, Dr. Meera Dass and I visited the site in different seasons and on equinox and solstice days to conduct observations. The summer solstice in June was found to be particularly significant. On this day, as will be clear from the brief disquisition on astronomy

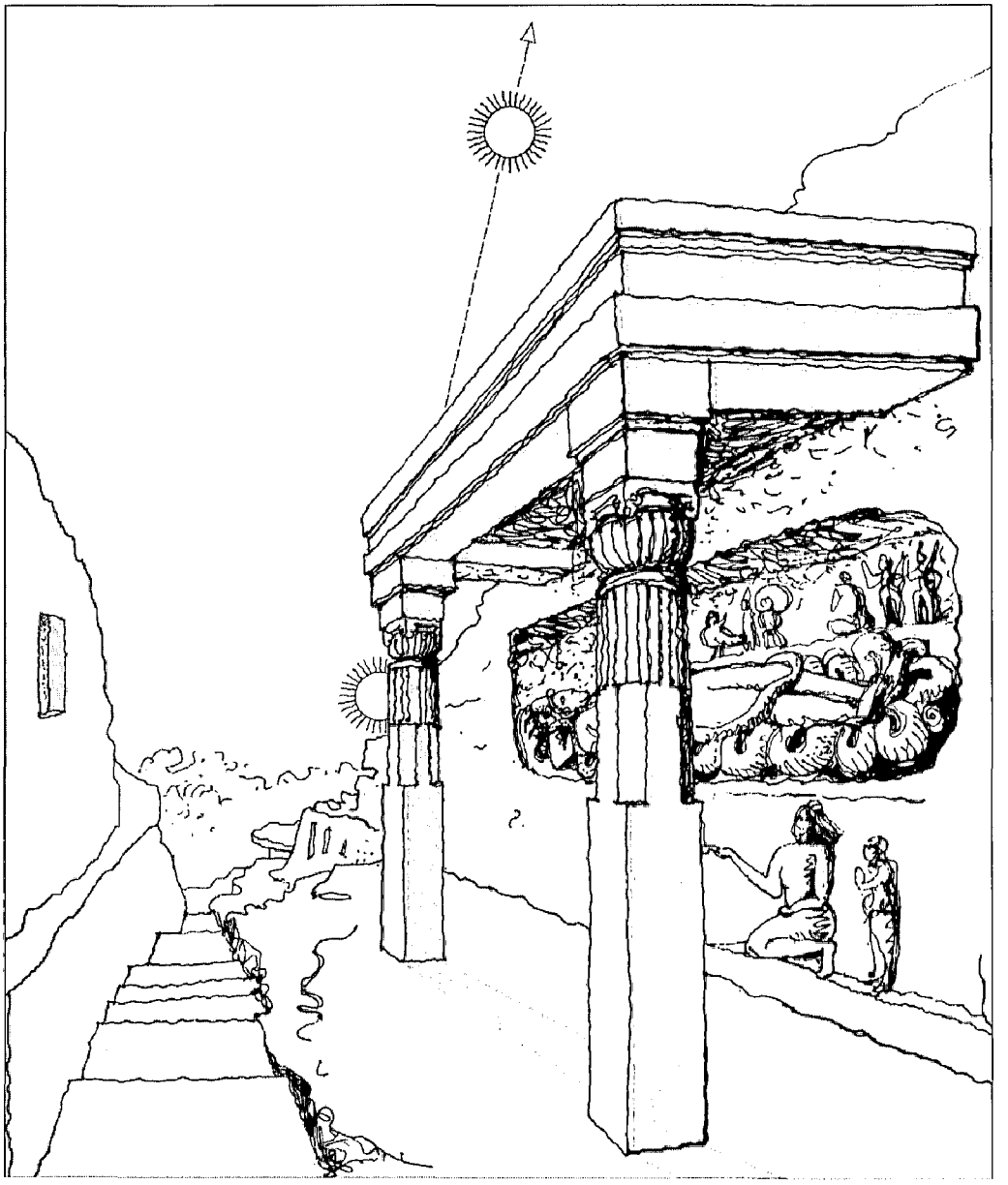



11 Drawing showing the position of the rising sun at different times of the year.




12 Drawing showing how the two halves of the year were determined by the position of the rising sun in ancient India.

just given, the sun completes the *uttarāyaṇa* and rises as far north as it will go on the eastern horizon. At Udayagiri on the solstice day we observed that the sun rose in alignment with the north wall of the passage, specifically the upper section of the passage opposite and above the image of Nārāyaṇa. The alignment



13 Udayagiri. Drawing showing the position of the rising sun in the central passage on the summer solstice.

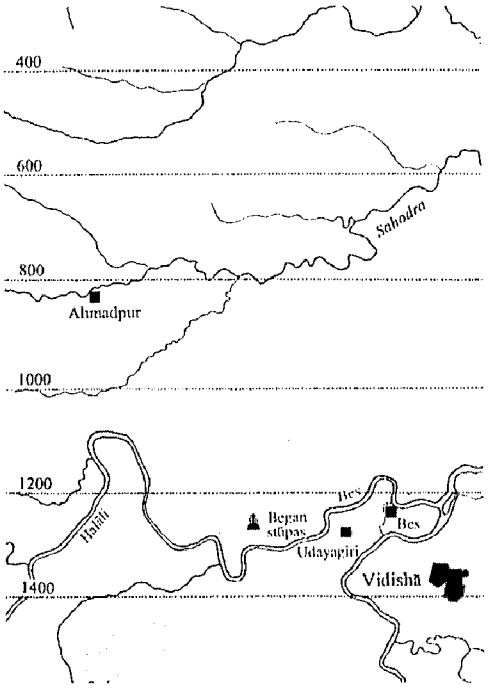
will be clear from the drawing in Figure 13. As the day progressed, this part of the passage remained in line with the sun's path.

In addition to being the longest day of the year, the solstice is also the day on which the sun reaches its highest point in the sky. Exactly how high the sun will stand at midday depends on the latitude of the observer. The basic principle is that the farther south one travels, the higher the sun will be. On the Tropic of Cancer – which is where Udayagiri is located – the sun appears directly overhead at 90°. And because the sun is directly overhead, there will be no shadows.

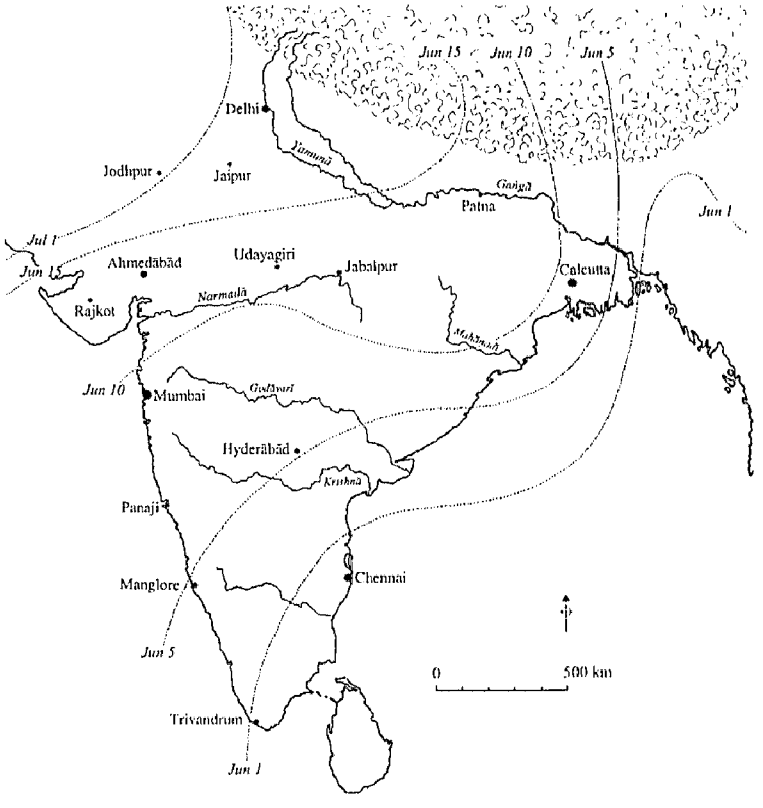
That this, and the other observations just mentioned, were made from the early centuries CE is shown by their exact description in *Arthaśāstra* 2: 20: 28–41. This section of the text presents an account of the units of time and then notes (v. 37) that the length of the days and nights are equal on the equinoxes in months of Caitra and Āśvayuja (i.e., Āśvina). From the equinoxes, the lengths of the days change as do the lengths of observable shadows (v. 38). Then, after detailing how the length of the shadows changes during the course of a day, the text states that at midday during the summer solstice in the month of Āṣāḍha there are no shadows (v. 41).[10] For six months after this the length of shadows successively increases (v. 42).

These points indicate that the observations recorded in the *Arthaśāstra* were made on or near the Tropic of Cancer, demonstrating the direct relevance of the text to the study of Udayagiri. The pertinence of the *Arthaśāstra* is increased by references to it in literary works of the early Gupta period, the point being that the *Arthaśāstra* was known and cited in the fourth and fifth centuries.[11] At Udayagiri, in addition to the lack of shadows at midday on the summer solstice, there were virtually no shadows in the passage throughout the day. This is because the passage is aligned to the sun's east–west path, a natural configuration that seems to be the chief reason for the site's significance. There were, it must be admitted, narrow shadows cast by the southern wall when, ideally, there should have been none. This anomaly is explained by the fact that the Tropic of Cancer now stands a few kilometres south of Udayagiri rather than directly on the site. A fact well known to astronomers but not generally appreciated is that the Tropic moves due to natural oscillations in the earth's axis. The line of the Tropic migrates several metres each year so that over the last millennium it has fallen on Udayagiri for only relatively short periods of time. The movement is predictable, and the exact position of the Tropic at specific dates can be recovered (i.e., we can determine when the Tropic stood on the hill). For our purposes, it is unnecessary to work through every particular; the position of the Tropic at selected dates is shown here in Figure 14.[12] The main point, irrespective of the exact position of the Tropic, is that Udayagiri was a place where the summer solstice was observed and astronomical observations made.

The summer solstice is naturally a hot time of year in northern India and, according to traditional accounts, people say that the days around the solstice are very hot and still, the heat being broken at last by the first Monsoon rain.[13] So the basic reason for observing the position of the sun and determining the time of the solstice was that it could be used to anticipate the arrival of the rains. The progress of the Monsoon in modern times is shown here in Figure 15. That observations in anticipation of the Monsoon were made in the passage before the Gupta period is indicated by the shell inscriptions that are engraved on the walls of the passage. That we cannot read these inscriptions makes them especially poignant. Whatever may have been communicated – probably names




14 Vidiśā region. Map showing the position of the Tropic of Cancer between 400 CE and 1400 CE.

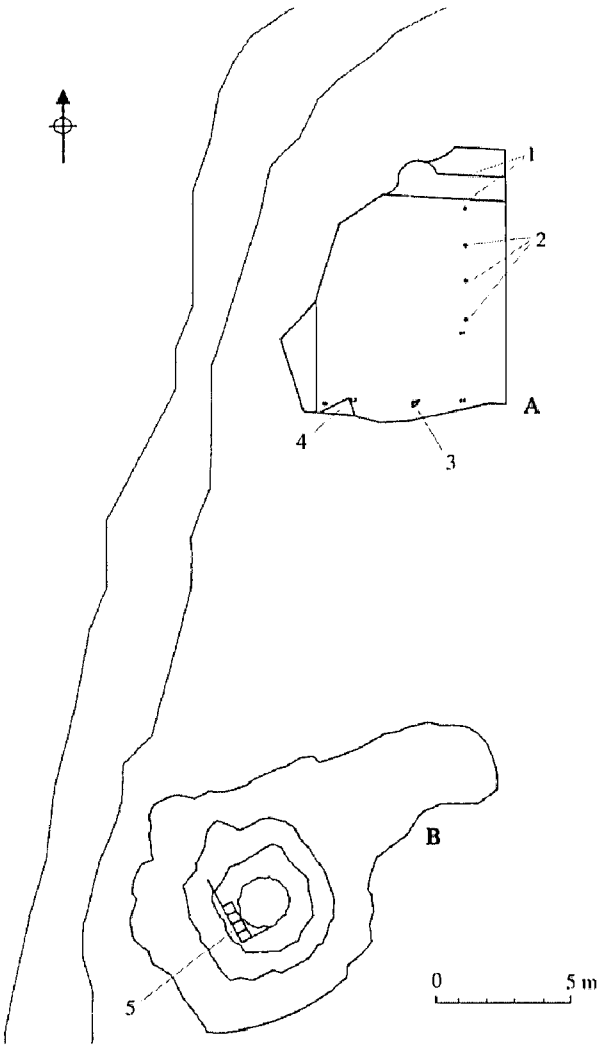



15 India. Map showing the progress of the monsoon in a typical year.

of important gods and men – the way the curving letters scroll over the whole surface lends magical properties to the site, heightening the feeling that the passage had long been a place of talismanic power.

The summer solstice was, rather obviously, not the only observation with which ancient astronomers and time-keepers were concerned. The other important solar event was the winter solstice in December. This day is the exact opposite of the summer solstice: instead of being the longest day, it is the shortest; instead of the sun reaching the zenith, it reaches the nadir; instead of the sun rising in the extreme north, it rises in the extreme south; instead of there being no shadows at noon, the shadows are at their maximum length. This matter of shadows brings us to a key point in ancient time-keeping. At noon during the winter solstice on the Tropic of Cancer, the shadow of any object, like a gnomon, will have the same length as the object itself.[14] Thus, for example, a staff one metre long will cast a shadow of one metre. So where might such shadows have fallen and been observed in ancient times? The probable place, based on observations made on the winter solstice, was the stone platform immediately above the passage (Figures 6 and 16). This platform – cut from the living rock – was subject to careful modification from an early date. In addition to various holes and marks, which have yet to be fully explained, there are traces of radiating lines near the south edge. These lines are shaped like a fan and appear to be part of a sundial. From these features, it seems that if we are looking for the location of an ancient Indian observatory, this platform is the most likely candidate. On-the-spot observations confirmed this supposition. At dawn on the winter solstice, the sun rose at precise right angles to the eastern edge of the platform. The orientation is shown here in Figure 17. This shows that the platform was deliberately shaped as a result of winter-solstice observations.

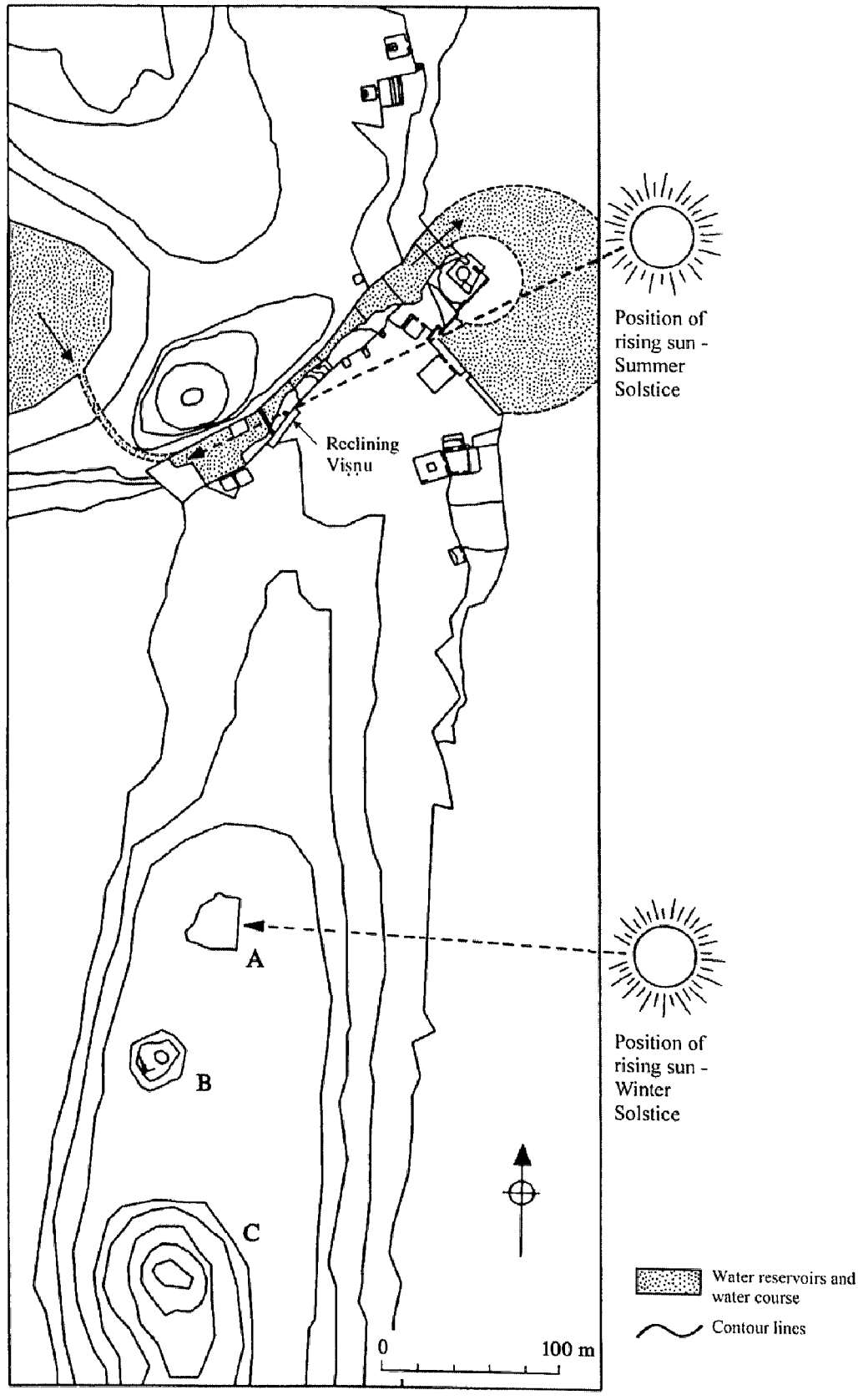
A few metres to the southwest of the rock-cut platform is a small mound (Figures 16 and 17). This was the site of a second platform and some of the original foundations stones are preserved. A column with a lion capital, dating to the mid-second century BCE, seems to have been set up at this spot (Figure 18). Elsewhere I have presented a detailed study of this early lion capital and its calendrical iconography.[15] Here I only need note that on-site experimental observations showed that at midday on the winter solstice the shadow of a column standing at this place would have fallen on the rock-cut platform. This confirms that the rock-cut platform was probably used for astronomical purposes. One further observation is warranted. As just noted, some of the foundation stones of the small mound are preserved. The orientation of these stones is such that they line up with the position of the rising sun at the summer solstice. This means that the lion on top of the column would have faced the rising sun in June. This is not a very startling conclusion given that lions are often regarded as symbols of the sun. In terms Udayagiri as a whole, this orientation shows that the rock-cut platform, column, and lion capital replicated



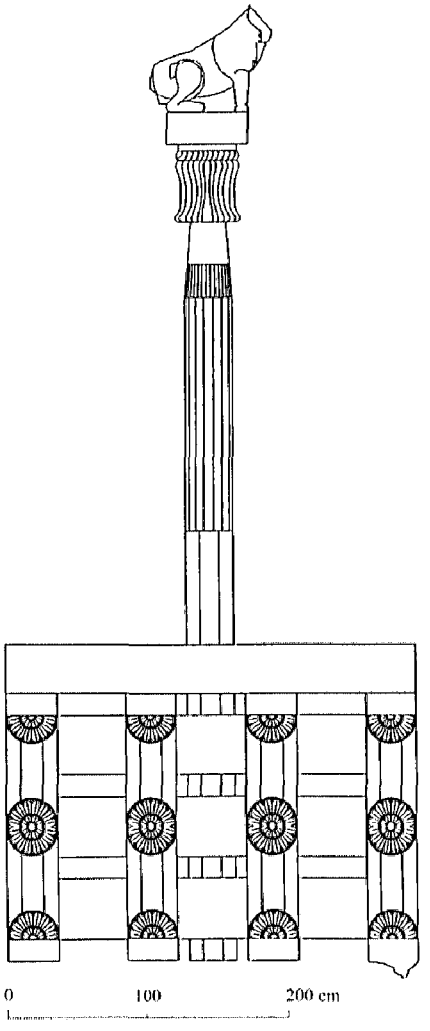

16 Udayagiri. Drawing of the central ridge. *A = rock-cut astronomical dais; B = platform for the second-century* BCE *lion capital in Figure 18. 1 = slabs removed by stone cutting, probably nineteenth century; 2 = ancient post holes; 3 = trace of sundial; 4 = square cut in rock with holes for iron pins; 5 = remaining foundation stones.*

those parts of the passage that were used to observe the sunrise at the summer solstice, perhaps allowing more precise measurements. Although this is difficult to describe, the idea is readily conveyed in diagrammatic form (see Figure 17).

The features just described suggest that while the natural shape of the passage at Udayagiri allowed the *uttarāyaṇa* and *dakṣiṇāyana* to be charted with reasonable accuracy, the need for precise calculations inspired the construction of "scientific stations" on the ridge. The precise measurements made at these stations may prove impossible to recover, but it would appear that the rules found in astronomical texts for calculating the solstices, the position of the constellations, and the lunar months would have been carried out near natural features that facilitated observation and would have consequently provided a convenient spot for astronomical devices.[16]




17 Udayagiri. *Drawing showing the position of the rising sun on the winter and summer solstices. A = rock-cut astronomical dais; B = foundations of platform; C = Bhāillasvāmin temple mound.*




18 Udayagiri. Reconstruction of the second-century BCE lion capital, column, and railing based on surviving fragments.

So far we have been concerned with years and half-years as defined by the *uttarāyaṇa* and *dakṣiṇāyana*. Months were determined by observing the moon in relation to the relevant constellations; fortnights were determined by the waxing and waning of the moon itself. That the months were known at Udayagiri is shown by representations on two sculptures from the site to which attention has already been drawn (Figures 9 and 10).[17] Moving from months and fortnights down to smaller segments of time, we might expect to find the remains of some sort of water-clock at Udayagiri. In ancient India, water-clocks were the preferred method for calculating hours, minutes, and seconds. We can easily imagine a clock of this kind being serviced by the tanks and channels above and in the passage at Udayagiri.

The available data on the ancient Indian water-clock was collected many years ago by J. F. Fleet.[18] He visualised the mechanism as a series of reservoirs with water flowing from one reservoir to the next. Although calibration would

have required the attention of technical specialists, the basic working principle was simple enough: portions of time were determined by how long it took for water to fill a reservoir and then overflow, through a carefully fitted pipe, into a succession of reservoirs below. If the reservoirs were set in a sufficiently long series, time could be kept when solar-based observations were not possible (i.e., throughout the night and during cloudy days). Looking beyond India, we can visualise the clock with the help of archaeological finds in East Asia. A good example is the water-clock at Asuka in Japan, introduced by the Buddhists, and so perhaps Indian in its ultimate design. This was built in 628 CE.[19] Working by analogy, we can apply some aspects of this to Udayagiri. We are not, of course, arguing that there is any direct influence one way or the other. Rather we are looking for general similarities with regard to the regulation and manipulation of water at different levels. One feature at Udayagiri that points toward the careful regulation of water is a square chamber at the top of the passage (Figure 6 adjacent to Cave 13). This was once an enclosed tank, something shown by a rock-cut doorframe on one side. The roof and built portions of the door have disappeared long since, but enough is preserved to show that the chamber was originally walled and covered. Near the bottom of the door, there is a fairly large hole passing through the rock. This would have served as an outlet for water. Immediately below the tank, cut into the passage wall and floor, there is a shallow channel, perhaps for some kind of water-pipe. All these features indicate that the tank in question was part of a fairly complex water-system. Water from this tank was drawn from the main reservoir at the head of the passage and, we would suggest, directed into a water-clock on the passage steps. We have already noted in Section 1.1 that the steps are water-worn in several places and functioned as a stepped water-cascade. The lack of any tanks or containers for holding water on the steps themselves makes it unlikely that they were part of the water-clock. Rather it seems that the steps functioned as an elaborate drain for excess water. The water-clock itself was probably a modest structure, placed on or beside the steps. Some idea of the containers that might have been used to hold the water and the way they could have been connected with each other can be gleaned from early fragments preserved in Korea.[20] These consisted of a series of stone bowls. The bowls – monolithic and perfectly simple in design – had holes on one side and were placed on bases or low columns. Pipes inserted in the holes joined one bowl to the next.

Based on these suggestions, which we qualify as preliminary and tentative, future research could involve microdocumentation of the visible traces at Udayagiri and a close study of these features in partnership with historians of astronomy and science. A survey of the area might also lead to the discovery of stone bowls or fragments of similar objects. That monolithic stone containers for water were made at Udayagiri is evident from a large stone trough lying near the top of the northern hill (Figure 3). This curious object has been known since the

time of Cunningham's survey in the mid-nineteenth century, but no attempt has been made to explain its purpose and location.[21] We cannot claim to have resolved all the problems posed by the stone trough, but there can be little doubt that it formed part of a large water-management system. As this relates to how and why water was provided to the passage, a short account of the system's morphology and contiguous features will not be out of place.

The most conspicuous monumental feature near the stone trough is the large ruined temple that crowns the summit of the northern hill (Figure 3). We will return to this temple in Section 1.12; here we only need note that the position of the temple suggests that water from the building – both rain water from the roof and water from the lustration of the image – was directed toward the trough. Any excess would have drained into the tank just below the temple (Figure 3). At present, this reservoir is filled with silt and visible only as a shallow dip in the ground toward the hill's western edge. From there, water seems to have been directed southward across the plateau, past an area of ruined structures – possibly a royal enclave – and down the ravine that leads to the main tank. From the main tank, water was taken to the passage, as already noted.

A notable feature of this water system is the massive scale of the tank at the head of the passage. As will be clear from the plan given in Figure 3, this tank was created by throwing a barrier across the steep valley on the south side of the northern hill. The dam rises to the height of about eight meters and seems excessive at first glance (i.e., the tank appears to have more capacity than would be needed to collect the rain which would have fallen during the Monsoon season). To address this problem, John Sutcliffe, an hydrologist with extensive experience in central India, used the topographic survey prepared for the present study to calculate the volume of the tank against the run-off from the hill. Sutcliffe's analysis, given here in Appendix II, shows that in an average year the tank would have been filled to capacity. The result was surprising and demonstrates the need to proceed in a scientific fashion. That the tank does not hold much in the rainy season at the present time is probably due to long neglect of the clay lining. However this may be, significant quantities of water were once collected in the tank. This water was needed to feed the stepped water-cascade and perpetual water-clock in the passage. A steady flow of water was also needed to bathe and cool the images added to the site during the time of the Guptas. But before turning to the special needs created by these new images, we must return to the theme of time.

## 1.4. VIṢṆU'S FOUR MONTHS OF SLEEP

Our discussion to this point has taken us from solar observations of the year and half-year down to water-regulated hours, minutes, and seconds. This concern with time and the annual cycle is reinforced by the iconography of the main

19 Bhitrī (District Ghazipur, UP). Electrotype of the seal of Kumāragupta II (circa CE 474–76). *British Museum (1890. 2–13. 1).*

sculptures at Udayagiri, notably the reclining image of Nārāyaṇa set in a shallow niche at the top of the passage. There Viṣṇu is shown sleeping on the coils of the great serpent Ananta (Figure 5). Below the god is a kneeling worshipper holding a censer, behind him an attendant. Above the recumbent image of Viṣṇu is a row of small figures. These are identifiable as Nidrā or Tāmāsi, the goddess of sleep, and the creator Brahmā, seated on a lotus.[22] To the right of Brahmā is Garuḍa, Viṣṇu's vehicle and the royal emblem of the Gupta dynasty (Figure 19).[23] Then come the personifications of Viṣṇu's weapons: Gadādevī, Cakrapuruṣa, and Śārṅgastrī.[24] Finally, on the extreme right, are the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and a seated sage, possibly Mārkaṇḍeya.

The position of the Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa panel is such that the image is in shade for most of the year. It is only toward the end of June – the time of the summer solstice – that the sculpture is lit for several days. If we remove the modern shed in our imagination and insert a modest porch sheltering the image as shown in Figure 13, we can visualise Nārāyaṇa being touched by the rising sun in late June.[25] This is important because Viṣṇu is "put to sleep" for the rainy season at this time throughout north and central India. The precise date for the beginning of the god's sleep is the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha; he is "woken up" four months later on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Kārttika.[26] The sleeping and waking of Viṣṇu are the centrepiece of the *varṣāmāsavrata*, an important rite mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, an early Bhāgavata text giving concise summaries of a wide range of rituals.[27] Varāhamihira subsequently made an allusion to the "waking of Viṣṇu" in his *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* and the days are still marked by festivals in Bengal and elsewhere.[28]

That the naissance of this tradition can be traced to the imperial court and the heyday of Gupta supremacy is shown by the Poona plates of Prabhāvatī-guptā. Styling herself in these plates a staunch devotee of the Lord (*atyantabhagavadbhaktā*), they record a grant by her to a Vaiṣṇava religious teacher on the twelfth day of the bright half of Kārttika. This day is immediately after Viṣṇu has been roused from his period of sleep and is significant because religious gifts are normally made in the morning after an observance is finished.[29] Also of special note is the fact that Kālidāsa, the greatest literary figure of the Gupta age, frames his celebrated *Meghadūta* around the *varṣāmāsavrata*. At the beginning of the poem, the exiled Yakṣa first sees the cloud that will serve as his love-messenger in the month of Āṣāḍha.[30] Then toward the end of the poem the Yakṣa declares that his banishment will end when Viṣṇu wakes from his sleep.[31]

śāpānto me bhujagaśayanād utthite śārṅgapāṇau
śeṣān māsān gamaya caturo locane mīlayitvā |
paścād āvāṃ virahaguṇitaṃ taṃ tam ātmābhilāṣaṃ
nirvekṣyāvaḥ pariṇataśaraccandrikāsu kṣapāsu ||

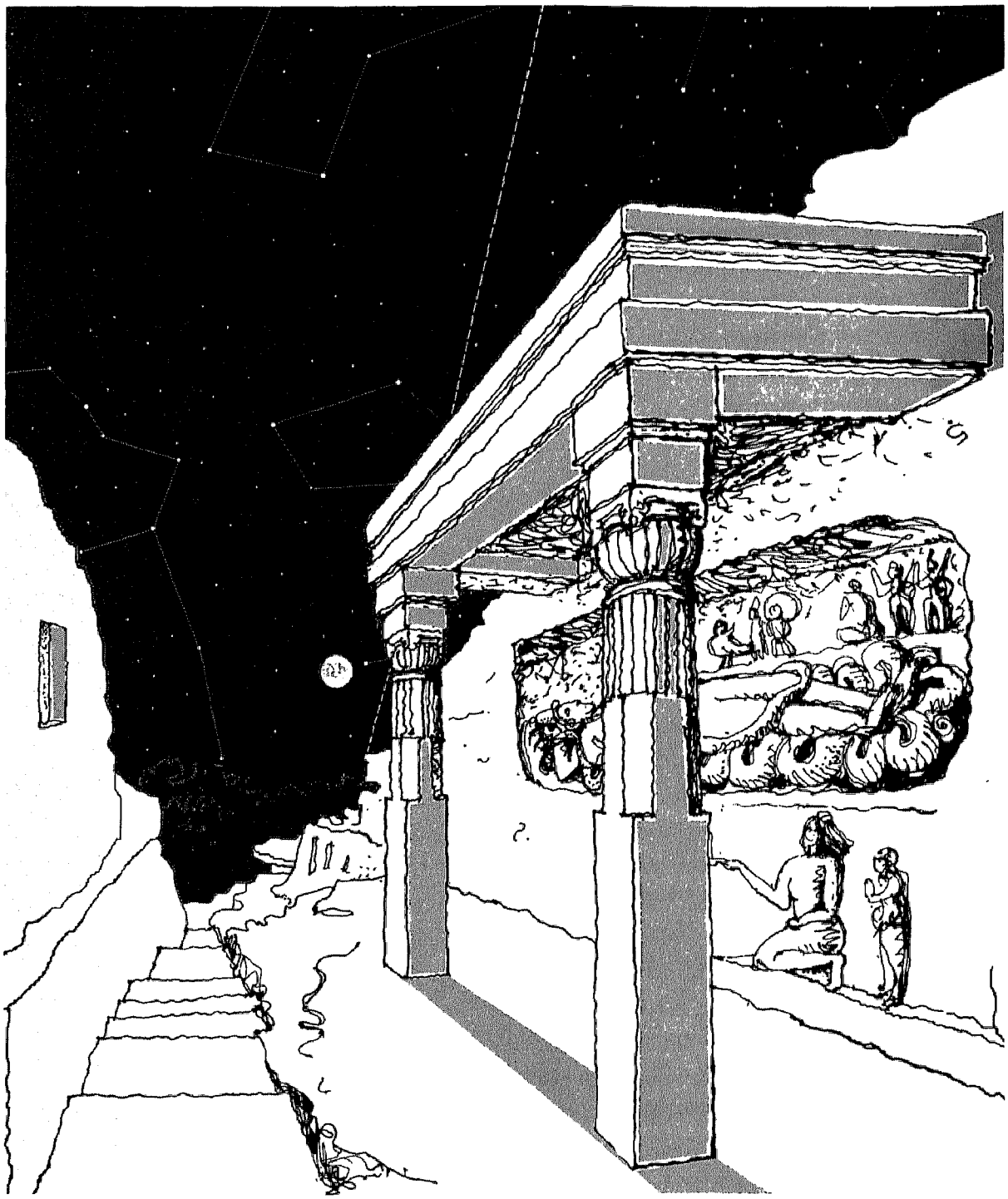
Śārṅga-armed Viṣṇu sleeps on Śeṣa,
And when he wakes my exile ends.
Thus, my dear, please close your eyes
And muddle through the next four months.
Under the cool, full moon of autumn,
We'll slake our starved desires.

Kālidāsa dwells at length on central India and indeed seems to have come from Ujjain, so it is not surprising that reference is made to the *varṣāmāsavrata* in a Gupta-period inscription from the region. The inscription in question belongs to Viśvavarman, a subordinate of Kumāragupta I (circa CE 414–47) and was found at Gaṅgdhār, a village south of Jhālrāpāṭan on the northern edge of the Mālwa plateau. Its main purpose was to document the building of some temples in Mālava year 480 (CE 423–24).[32] What is relevant in this record is the account of Kārttika, the month in which the temples were consecrated. A number of poetic conceits are lavished on this time of year, one of them being that it was "the time for waking Madhusūdana from his sleep."[33] This shows conclusively that the four-month period of Viṣṇu's sleep was known in central India during the first half of the fifth century and settles any reservations we might have about using Kālidāsa and poetic evidence for historical purposes. More especially, the epithet Madhusūdana, "the slayer of the demon Madhu," indicates that the four-month period was connected with Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* (25: 1–52) recounts how the god was roused from his sleep to kill Madhu and Kaiṭabha after they attempted to thwart Brahmā's creation of a new world.[34] That a version of the story given in the *Vāyu* (it appears also in the Epics,

*Harivaṃśa* and *Matsya*) was known at Udayagiri is shown by the inclusion of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha in the Nārāyaṇa panel.

In addition to the iconography, the ritual celebration of the four-month period of Viṣṇu's sleep at Udayagiri can be deduced from the use of the site to chart the position of the rising sun at different times of year. Because the passage facilitated the prediction of the summer solstice and the onset of the rains, it could also accommodate the festival that celebrated the arrival of the Monsoon and the beginning of Viṣṇu's sleep. That the festival did indeed take place at Udayagiri is corroborated by the date given in the inscription at Cave 6. Located near the mouth of the passage, Cave 6 consists of a rock-cut chamber and a cluster of relief panels. We will return to these details shortly; at this point we only need note that the inscription carries a precise date: Gupta year 82 on the eleventh lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha.[35] In other words – and this is very important – the Cave 6 inscription records that a dedication took place at Udayagiri on the very day when Viṣṇu was put to sleep. So several facts show that the *varṣāmāsavrata* was celebrated at Udayagiri in the reign of Candragupta II: the position of the Nārāyaṇa image in the passage and the summer sun at the solstice, the references to the waking of Viṣṇu in Gupta-period texts and inscriptions, and the dating of an inscription on the site to the very day when Viṣṇu was meant to be put to sleep.

The points we have made so far demonstrate that the theme of time-keeping at Udayagiri was determined by the natural features of the site and that the carvings introduced during the Gupta period elaborated these themes in a dramatic and visual manner. Some additional observations can be made in this regard. As we have just noted, Viṣṇu was put to sleep on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight in Āṣāḍha. This night falls three days before the full moon. This raises an interesting problem, namely whether the position of the moon in the month of Āṣāḍha has any bearing on the sculptures and their position at the Udayagiri. The matter is complicated because the sun and moon follow different paths across the sky. The sun is relatively straightforward: it looks more or less the same every day, it rises in the east and any change in the position where it seems to rise is neatly tied to the passing seasons. The moon is more varied: it waxes and wanes, it rises and sets at different times during the course of a single month, and its path is dramatically different from that of the sun. A detailed explanation of the Gupta understanding of these lunar phenomena would take us too far afield; the key point here is that the path of the moon stands at 5° to the ecliptic of the sun. Thus, at certain times the path of the moon will take it further north than the sun. This means, quite simply, that the passage and the image of Nārāyaṇa are bound to be illuminated by the rays of the moon at certain times. Determining when this occurred historically is a relatively simple matter thanks to computer programmes that can be used to do the necessary calculations and generate images of the sky at any given time. These show that



20 Udayagiri. View toward the eastern horizon at 23° 32′ 11″ and 77° 46′ 20″ on 9 June 401 at 11.20 GMT. Immediately after sunset, the waxing moon is seen rising north of the sun's ecliptic (dotted line).

Gupta year 82, the date of the Cave 6 inscription, was particularly significant. For the present purpose, we will assume that Āṣāḍha 82 was an expired year and corresponded to June–July 401.[36] The full moon occurred on 12 June. Three days before this, the day when Viṣṇu was "put to sleep" for the season, the

waxing moon rose north of the sun's ecliptic. As the moon rose higher and higher in the eastern sky, it would have been clearly visible and illuminated the passage with its rays (Figure 20).

At the risk of testing my reader's patience, I should be quite explicit in explaining the implications of these facts. On the solstice day, as we have seen, the sun finishes its *uttarāyaṇa* and rises as far north as it will go in relation to the eastern horizon. At Udayagiri this resulted in Nārāyaṇa being lit by the rays of the sun for a number of days. Now the relevant point is this: on the day when Viṣṇu was supposed to be "put to sleep" for the rainy season in June 401, the moon would have also illuminated the southern wall of the passage and the image of Nārāyaṇa. Of course the image is not actually dated, so it is possible that the moon only illuminated the space where the niche and its sculptures were subsequently carved.

Although doubts might be expressed about the methodological validity of making nocturnal observations by the light of the moon – I could easily be accused of being a lunatic by those who police disciplinary boundaries – we need to remember that star-gazing was a major concern in ancient India. The development of a precise astronomy and related systems of prognostication that appear in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* would have mandated observations throughout the year and at all times of day and night. At Udayagiri, members of the Gupta court and their astronomers would have watched the setting sun and rising moon as they stood on the hill. At sunset – the prescribed time for the king's matins according to the *Arthaśāstra* – they would have seen the moon rising in the passage and, as night closed in, the moon's rays falling on the sculpture of Nārāyaṇa or the place where it was going to be carved. And they would have seen the royal worshipper bathed in the moon's light just below the recumbent image.[37]

The direction and relevance of the present discussion is perhaps now becoming rather obvious, especially to those who know a little Sanskrit: Udayagiri has several inscriptions of Candragupta II, and Udayagiri is the only place in India known to have enjoyed the royal presence of that Gupta king.[38] Based on this, it does not seem unreasonable to say that the worshipper in the Nārāyaṇa panel is none other than Candragupta himself, the "moon-protected" king reverently putting Viṣṇu to sleep in the days before the full moon in Āṣāḍha.

Our attempt to associate the king and the moon is not purely speculative. Candragupta is compared directly to the rising full moon in the Mandasaur stone inscription of Govindagupta.[39] In other records, Samudragupta's fame is said to be as pure as rays of the moon, while the appearance of Ghaṭotkacagupta is compared to the rising moon, his virtues to its rays.[40] If these examples are not enough, the *Mudrārākṣasa*, a Sanskrit drama that turns on political intrigues in the court of Candragupta, opens with an elaborate pun that compares the king to the moon, the circle of his power to the moon's full orb and the enemy prince

21 Oval intaglio. Viṣṇu and a royal worshipper, fourth century. *Cunningham Collection, British Museum (1892. 11–3. 98).*

who threatens both to the malevolent planet that causes the eclipse.[41] There are thus good reasons for likening Candragupta to the moon and for identifying the tableau at Udayagiri as a commemorative sculpture representing a special religious performance by the king when he visited the site during his campaign of world conquest. This interpretation is reinforced by images of royal persons worshipping gods, a particularly telling example being a seal in the British Museum (Figure 21). This shows Viṣṇu holding a ring symbolising sovereign authority over a prince who stands reverently at his side. The Bactrian inscription records that this is the "leader of worship," a gloss of Sanskrit *paramabhāgavata*, an important religious role to which we will return in Section 1.11.[42] Although representations of royal worshippers did not become a major theme in Indian sculpture, examples continued to appear in later

centuries, an interesting case from central India being an inscribed panel at Mohangarh dating to the early years of the tenth century.[43]

Beyond the four-month period of Viṣṇu's sleep and the general turning of the seasons, the iconography of the images at Udayagiri shows they are set in a vast cosmological framework, a vision of the universe which fluctuates between periods of activity and periods of repose, periods when new creations are engendered and old worlds are swept away by great conflagrations or inundations. In this universe, driven by time and marked by water, Viṣṇu is both author and actor; as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* succinctly states: "Viṣṇu's very nature is Time."[44] The starting point for this at Udayagiri is again the sculpture of Nārāyaṇa. There he is shown on the serpent Ananta, resting and regenerating after the *kalpānta*, the end of the previous aeon. Ananta – the "endless-one" – combines both time and water: he is not just ordinary time but endless time, the infinite itself; he is not just ordinary water but the unmeasured cosmic waters. On him and out of him a whole new creation will be manufactured by Brahmā the creator. This is why Ananta is named Śeṣa, the "remainder" – he is the residue of the previous age, the sole survivor of a vanished world who will provide the seed for a new universe.[45] This new universe is already beginning to stir in the Nārāyaṇa panel: Brahmā has emerged from Nārāyaṇa's navel and the demons intent on upsetting the creator's work, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, have made their appearance.[46] But their demonic mischief is taking place in darkness – Viṣṇu has yet to stir and slay them.

## 1.5. NARASIṂHA

The first glimmer of light, the dawn of a new age, is heralded by Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha. His image appears adjacent to Nārāyaṇa in the passage (Figure 8).[47] Narasiṃha is half-man and half-lion, a dangerous hybrid inhabiting the juncture between night and day. The circumstances that prompted Viṣṇu to incarnate himself at this time and in this form centre on the story of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu. As recounted in the *Harivaṃśa* and several *Purāṇa*-s, Hiraṇyakaśipu was born of Diti and the sage Kaśyapa. Hiraṇyakaśipu was an astonishing prodigy: he recited the Vedas at birth and soon came to perform great austerities.[48] As a consequence, Brahmā granted him a special boon: immunity from death at the hands of gods, demigods, men, demons, and serpents. His invincibility seemed assured by the fact that Brahmā also decided that Hiraṇyakaśipu could not be killed on the earth or in the air, nor indeed during the day or at night. Made bold by these and other immunities, Hiraṇyakaśipu set about conquering the three worlds. The gods, much oppressed, finally appealed to Viṣṇu for help. He responded and overcame the demon by appearing as the lion-man, an unprecedented marvel that was neither man nor beast. Finding a way round Brahmā's guarantee that Hiraṇyakaśipu would not be killed at night

or in the day, Narasiṃha emerged at dawn, a time which is, of course, neither night nor day. And spreading the demon over his lap – a place which was neither on the ground nor in the air – Narasiṃha there ripped out his guts.

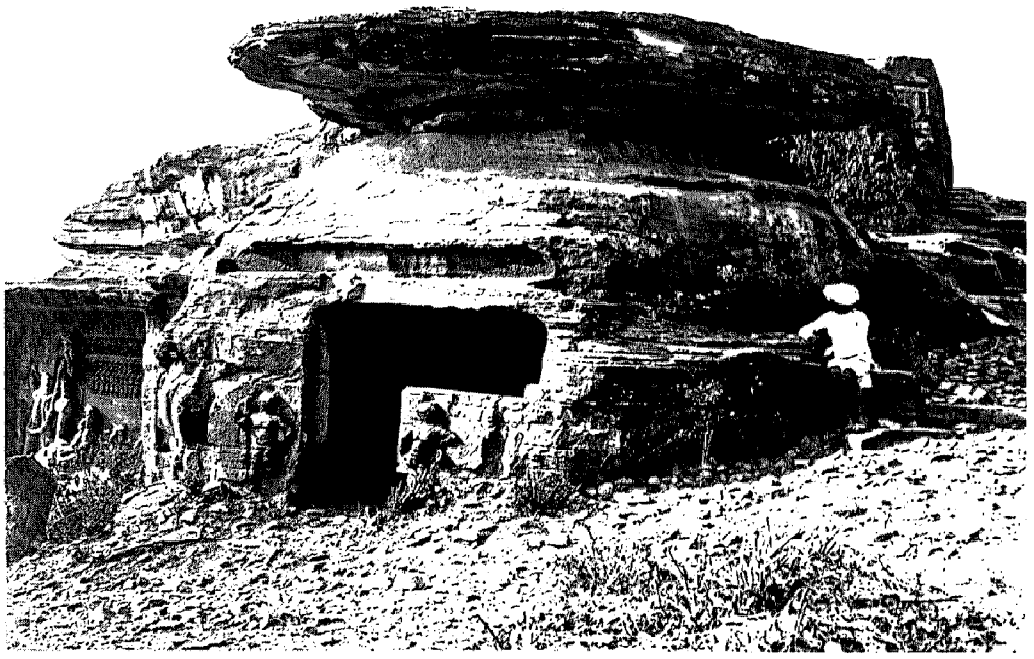
What is remarkable in this story is the degree to which the demon, rather than the god, stands at the centre of the narrative. The genealogy of Hiraṇyakaśipu tells us why, a genealogy that draws attention because it has a special bearing on Udayagiri and the iconography of the passage. Hiraṇyakaśipu, as already noted, was the son of Diti and Kaśyapa. But Diti was just one of thirteen sisters and Kaśyapa married them all – so says the *Mahābhārata*.[49] Other than Diti, Kaśyapa's most celebrated wife was Aditi. From her sprang the Ādityas, a class of gods connected with the sun.[50] We need not give the mythology in detail: the key point is that Diti and Aditi stand in opposition; one is the progenitrix of demonic darkness; the other of divine light. So the appearance of Narasiṃha in the passage marks not only the destruction of evil and the triumph of good but the simultaneous passing of darkness and the coming of a new dawn. The connection with the Gupta kings is all but explicit: Candragupta, whose image we have already identified in the passage beneath Nārāyaṇa, carried the epithet *vikramāditya*, literally 'he who is the sun of prowess.'[51] Through this title, Candragupta displayed his alliance with the splendour of the sun and, in equal measure, his opposition to darkness and the demonic forces associated with it.[52] Why Candragupta should choose to ally himself with the sun is made clear in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. In the account it gives of the various time-systems by which the universe is structured and according to which it operates, the text notes that Vaivasvata, the son of the sun, presides over the present age (*manvantara*). And the leading deity of this age – the age of Candragupta – is Āditya.[53]

Drawing parallels between current events and the life-stories of the gods was something that became increasingly prevalent in the Gupta period. As an example we might note how the Bhitrī pillar inscription records that Skandagupta "approached his mother whose eyes were full of tears, just as Kṛṣṇa did Devakī when he had slain his foe [i.e., his uncle Kaṃsa]."[54] As noted by Sircar and Bhandarkar, this verse shows that the enemy which Skandagupta defeated was a close relative of his mother, possibly her brother.[55] The events and genealogy of the period have been carefully revisited by Hans Bakker who has demonstrated that the verse refers to Ghaṭotkaca (circa CE 448–55) who was indeed Skandagupta's uncle and enemy.[56] This shows that the Gupta kings sought to describe their deeds in terms of stories in the Kṛṣṇa cycle. The use of religious narrative to justify political action had important consequences for the literary and visual culture of India. To phrase the matter another way, mythology provided raw material for the development of politicised double-meanings in iconography and literature, especially texts that were composed for public display in epigraphic form. Examples of this at Udayagiri will draw our attention shortly. For the moment, and in relation to the Narasiṃha image, we

can note how parallels could be drawn between earthly conflicts and the mythic battles that took place between the gods and demons. One particularly serious encounter was the Tārakāmaya, an event described in the *Harivaṃśa* and taken up again in the *Matsya* and *Vāyu Purāṇa*.[57] The trouble began when Soma abducted Tārā, the wife of Bṛhaspati. When Soma ignored pleas for her return, a fight became inevitable. As the war developed, the demons resorted to *māyā* or illusion, covering the battleground with fire. This fire, it turns out, was produced from the thigh of Ūrva who gave it to his disciple Hiraṇyakaśipu.[58] Although Hiraṇyakaśipu had been killed in hoary antiquity by Narasiṃha, the secret knowledge of the fire had passed to his descendants who, led by Kālanemi and others, now used it against the gods. To overcome this formidable weapon, the moon-god intervened and sprinkled dew on the flames until they were extinguished. Viṣṇu then appeared and cut off Kālanemi's head with his discus.

Aside from the astronomical aspects of this narrative – the protagonists are planets, Tārā means "star" and Kālanemi, "the felly of time" – the key point from the political perspective is that Candragupta used his name, titles, and heroic deeds to show that he was the living agent of the gods in their never-ending struggle with evil. The reasons for this representation were simple: demons are cognisant of their mortality and are inclined, as a consequence, to have big families. So even though the mighty demons of yore have met their end, innumerable demonic children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren guarantee that the gods will have to meet the challenge of evil in each age and generation. In a world informed by this vision of recurring and reincarnating evil, Candragupta styled himself *vikramāditya* to show his alliance with Āditya and Narasiṃha in the fight against darkness and Hiraṇyakaśipu. Simultaneously Candragupta, through his personal name, forged a link to the less-distant encounter in which the moon intervened to protect the gods from Hiraṇyakaśipu's fire-weapon. We may even see in Tārā, the goddess who was the ultimate cause of the Tārakamaya war, an allusion to Dhruvadevī, the queen whose name refers to the pole-star (*dhruva*) and whose abduction, like that of Tārā, was the centre of a celebrated conflict during the reign of Candragupta.[59]

The discussion to this point has aimed to show that the images of Nārāyaṇa and Narasiṃha, and the tales that can be associated with them, transform the passage from a simple observation post for noting the seasons into a microcosm of a universe animated by Viṣṇu and run according to his cycles of cosmic time. From the night of creation, a period of silence and repose, we edge towards dawn with the image of Narasiṃha. But the quiet light of the early hours soon yields to the blazing light of the rising sun on the eastern horizon. This draws us eastward toward the cave that stands at the mouth of the passage. Here, cut into a curious domical rock, is the cave-shrine dedicated to Śiva by Vīrasena, Candragupta's first minister (Figures 6 and 22). This is called Cave 8 in the archaeological literature. The inscription recording the work, incised on the

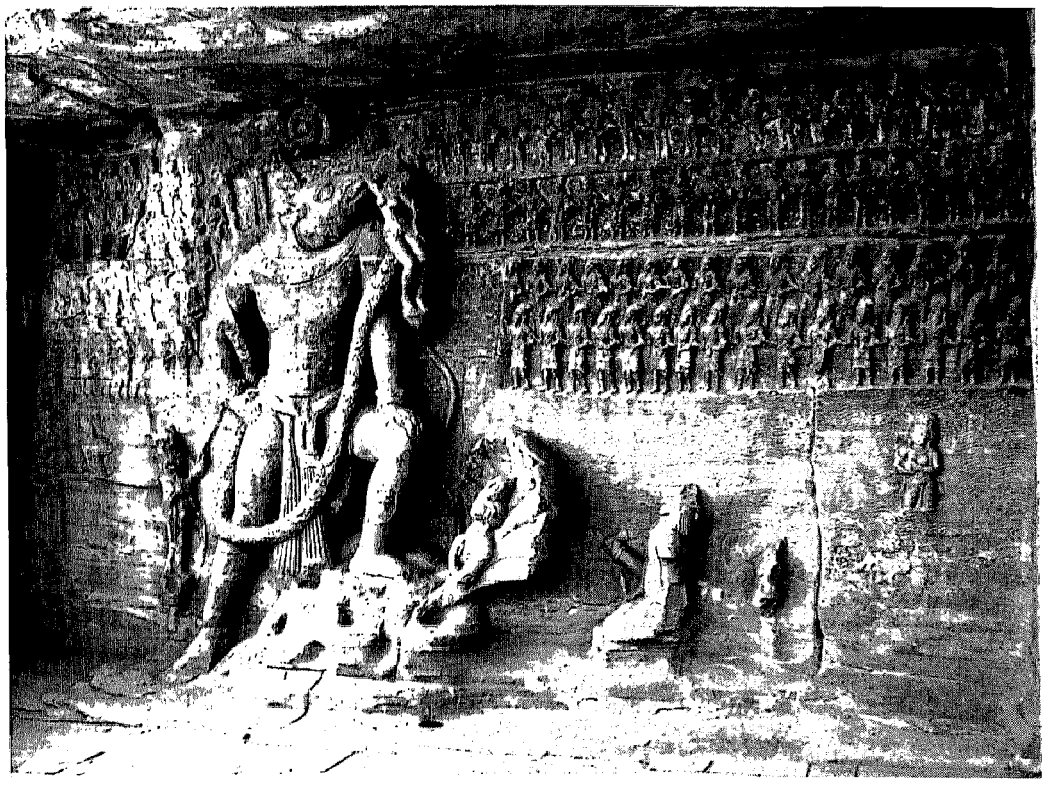


22 Udayagiri. Cave 8 and the central passage, from the east, as photographed in the early twentieth century. Courtesy of the British Library.

cave's back wall and thus facing toward the east, completes the picture of the passage at Udayagiri as a "passage of time," a place where the glory of the sun at the solstice was conflated with the king's personal and political splendour.[60] Vīrasena's opening verse, probably from his own pen given that he calls himself a poet (*kavi*), runs as follows:[61]

> [ya]d a[ṃ]ttarjjyotir arkkābham u[r]vvy[ām tu*]
> [durlabhaṃ nṛṣu*][|*]
> [tat sudhīhṛdaya* (?)]vyāpi candragu[ptākhya]m
> adbhutam [||*]
>
> The inner light which resembles the sun – which pervades the heart of the learned – but which is difficult to find among men upon the earth – that is the wonder called Candragupta!

With this verse Vīrasena seems to show familiarity with the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* and that text's account of the ideal king as a person who is assembled from "eternal particles" that have been extracted from the gods and who, as a result, surpasses all beings in lustre, dazzling their eyes and minds like the radiant sun (*ādityavat*).[62] This description, close in intent to the Udayagiri inscription and using analogous vocabulary, reinforces the association of Candragupta with the heavenly bodies and the special significance of Udayagiri as a place where the vivifying light of the sun, moon, and stars was



23 Udayagiri. Cave 5, Viṣṇu as the boar-headed Varāha, fifth century. *Courtesy of Anne Casile.*

observed and defined. But, as already hinted, Candragupta and his circle had rather larger ambitions: through a massive reworking of the site, they sought to transform Udayagiri from an aniconic observatory into an astro-political node where the royal path of the Gupta king intersected the ecliptics of the sun and moon. The purpose was to magnify Candragupta's greatness as he embarked on a campaign of universal conquest. The final goal in this grand scheme was the establishment of Candragupta as a paramount sovereign in the Vaiṣṇava mould.[63] This was achieved in several ways: by the performance of royal rites, notably the *rājasūya*, which combined the forces of the sun and moon in the king's person, by situating the king in a place where the movement of these celestial bodies was charted and thus captured, and by a suite of Vaiṣṇava images that developed astronomical and cosmological themes.[64] The culmination and centrepiece of this project – at once ritual, geographical, and visual – was the colossal figure of Varāha cut into the side of the mountain just a few metres from Vīrasena's cave (Figure 23).

## 1.6. VARĀHA

The figure of Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation is the most celebrated sculpture at Udayagiri, and its iconography has been studied by a number of scholars.[65]

My purpose here is not to summarise this literature or to take issue with specific points of iconographic interpretation. Rather, I would like to build on this work by describing the wider setting of the Varāha, continuing the style of analysis already used to explore the passage and the images of Nārāyaṇa and Narasiṃha. The themes of water and time, core leitmotifs at Udayagiri as we have seen, unite the Varāha panel with those in the passage. We begin with water, the most obvious physical link between the images at the site. As described previously, water entered the passage from the large tank on the western side of the hill. Passing through the passage and down the stepped water-cascade, this water would have eventually fed the large tank in front of the Varāha image. The tank is still extant, but, as already noted, the water-cascade is no longer functioning. The lower sections of the water course, once quite deep toward the eastern end, were deliberately filled from the 1930s as part of an ongoing programme of conservation work. More recently a wall and gate have been built, enclosing the Varāha in a small courtyard. The small road between the tank and the Varāha, gradually improved over the years, has also isolated the image from the tank. In order to visualise the Varāha in its original setting, we need to take away these accretions in our imagination. This done, we can readily see that water once lapped across the foot of the Varāha image, a fact proven by the crumbling stone and erosion at the bottom of the sculpture itself. This demonstrates that the great Varāha rose directly out of the water, especially during the rainy season. This is just how the incarnation is described in Chapter 248 of the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[66] Lotuses may also have been cultivated in the tank, so natural flowers would have blended with those carved across the lower portion of the panel; it seems likely that the carved lotuses would have been painted. Similarly, the wavy lines in the relief, an artistic convention for water, would have merged with the actual water of the pond (Figure 23). So from the hot and dusty rocks of Udayagiri today, we have to picture a wet and cool environment: water flowing and dripping everywhere in carefully organised channels, lovely plants and fragrant flowers growing in abundance, clear pools and tanks filled with lotuses and water-birds. The early sixth-century savant Varāhamihira envisages a place like this in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.[67]

salilodyānauyukteṣu kṛteṣv akṛtakeṣu ca |
sthānev eteṣu sāṃnidhyam upagacchanti devatāḥ || 3
saraḥsu nalinīchatranirastaraviraśmiṣu |
haṃsāṃsākṣiptakahlāravīthīvimalavāriṣu || 4
haṃsakāraṇḍavakrauñcacakravākavirāviṣu |
paryantaniculacchāyāviśrāntajalacāriṣu || 5
krauñcakāñcīkalāpāś ca kalahaṃsakalasvarāḥ |
nadyas toyāṃśukā yatra śapharīkṛtamekhalāḥ || 6
phullatīradrumottaṃsāḥ saṅgamaśroṇimaṇḍalāḥ|
pulinābhyunnatorasyā haṃsahāsāś ca nimnagāḥ || 7

vanopāntanadīśailanirjharopāntabhūmiṣu |
ramante devatā nityaṃ pureṣūdyānavatsu ca || 8

The gods haunt those spots which by nature or artifice are furnished with water and pleasure gardens –

Lakes where lotuses like parasols ward off the sun's darting beams – where the clear water has rows of white water-lilies tossed aside by the wings of swans – where curlews, ducks, swans and paddy-birds utter their resounding notes – where water-creatures repose in the shade of Nicula trees along the banks –

Places where rivers flow – with curlews for their tinkling chatelaine – with singing swans for their melodious voice – with the water-sheet for their cover – with tiny fish for their belt – where streams have blooming trees like ear-ornaments along their edge – where confluences are akin to curving hips – where sandy banks are like swelling breasts – where swans seem to be necklaces.

In isolated spots with rivers and rocky cataracts at the forest edge – and in fortresses with pleasure-gardens – in such places the gods ever take delight.

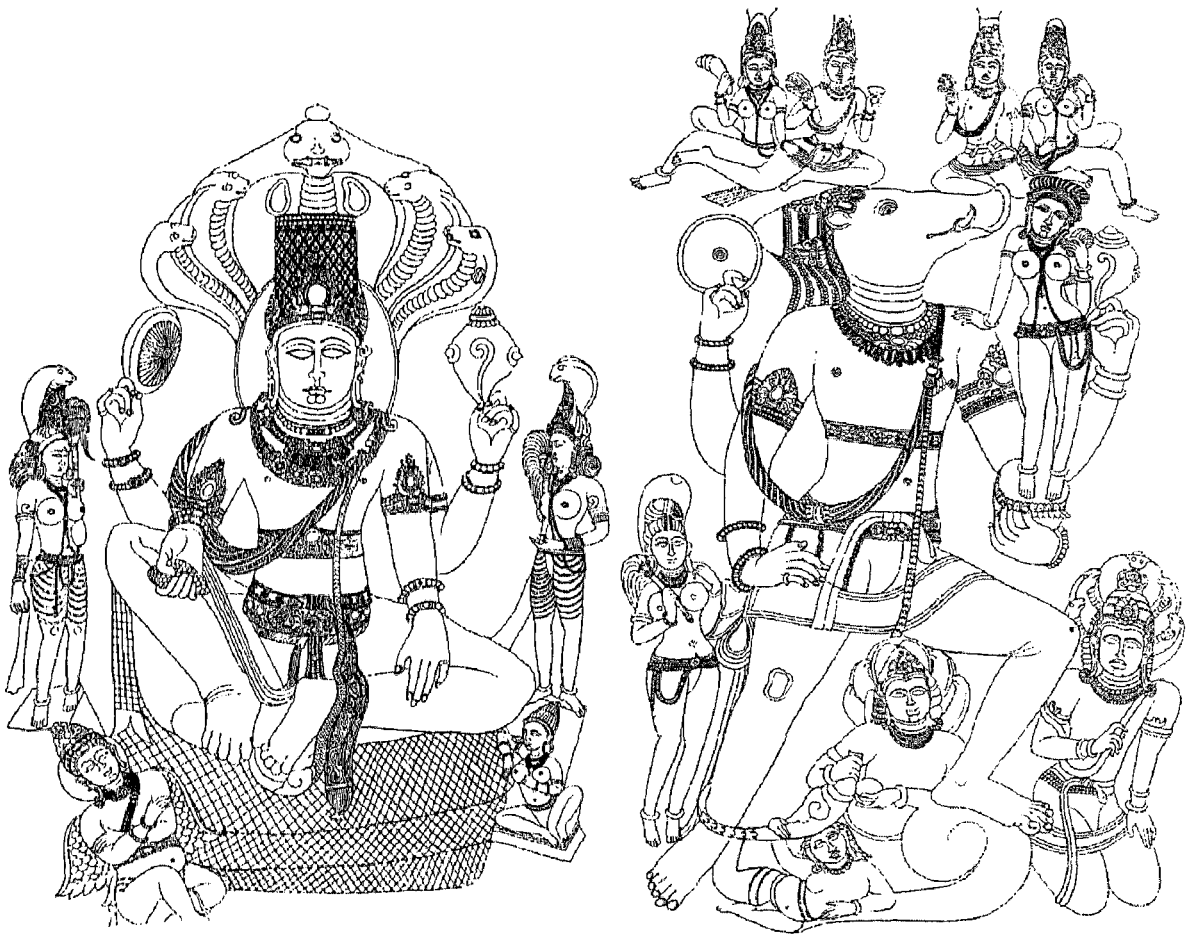
A similar mixture of water, nature, and art would have made Udayagiri a wonderfully poetic spot. But this garden of delights raises some serious questions: Why should the religious images introduced in the Gupta period inspire such a degree of hydrological engineering? What was it about the sculptures that necessitated environmental manipulation and so much cooling water? An answer is given by the *Bhagavad Gītā*, specifically the astonishing theophany provided in Chapter 11. There Viṣṇu unmasks his supernal form and reveals that his "splendour is equal to a thousand suns rising simultaneously in the sky." He is a "mass of lustre which shines everywhere – on every side a blazing sun of immeasurable fire." His eyes are "the moon and sun, his mouth a roaring sacrificial flame which burns the whole universe with his own lustre."[68] This form is "marvelous and awful" – before it the "three worlds tremble."[69] So Viṣṇu is nothing if not hot and dangerous. And once these visions of Viṣṇu migrated from a text into concrete and consecrated images, as they had done at Udayagiri, there was a very urgent need to keep the god's forms cool – they had to be placated through a defined programme of lustration and veneration lest their awesome power break free and wreck havoc on the world. These beliefs find living application at Siṃhācalam where a cooling layer of sandalwood paste over the image of Narasiṃha protects worshippers from the deity's horrible wrath.[70]

Just as flowing water, rising and falling with the seasons, once cooled and linked the main images at Udayagiri in a tangible way, so too were the images linked by the seasonal cycle and its ritual reenactments. The key moment in this cycle, as noted in Section 1.4, was the day when Viṣṇu was "put to sleep"

toward the end of June. This marked the end of the sun's *uttarāyaṇa* and the onset of the Monsoon. The image of Nārāyaṇa was positioned so that it was touched by the rays of the rising sun only at this time of year. But of course this is only half of the ritual equation – Viṣṇu's sleep lasts but four months and sooner or later he has to wake. The problem I faced at Udayagiri was how to trace Viṣṇu's "waking day" in archaeological terms.

A natural starting point for the exploration of this problem was the image of Nārāyaṇa itself. Periodic visits over several months showed that when the time came for the god to be roused from his sleep in November the rising sun did not touch the image – it was completely in the shadows during the morning hours. As sunset approached, however, the sun again entered the passage and touched the image. Although this prompted me to carry a number of observations and calculations, I eventually discovered that the setting sun was not significant. The image was touched by the sun's rays every afternoon from June to December so the "waking day" did not stand out – it was just another day. In order for the *utthānaikādaśī* to be special, some sort of structure would have to have been constructed at the top of the passage to block the rays of the setting sun. This would have been an easy matter, but all built-structures have vanished. The only survival is the stump of a large doorframe just opposite the image of Nārāyaṇa.[71] I suspect this may have been part of a door that was used to block the setting sun during the sleeping period. When the day came for Viṣṇu to be roused, the leaves could have been opened to admit light. But apart from the possibility that some sort of "ritual closure" could have been effected by a contrivance of this kind, it is counterintuitive to think that Viṣṇu's "waking day" would have been signaled by a recumbent and sleeping image. We should rather expect a standing figure. So it seems that the Varāha is the image that represents Viṣṇu after he has stirred from his sleep. The Varāha is oriented toward the east and is positioned to catch the light of the rising sun throughout the *dakṣiṇāyaṇa*, including the waking day in the month of Kārttika.

The suggestion that Varāha represents Viṣṇu after he has woken up – logical enough in itself – is supported by the sculptural programme in Cave 3 at Bādāmi. This cave is a useful tool for understanding Udayagiri because it shares many of its themes, albeit in a more developed form. The Bādāmi cave was excavated under the patronage of Maṅgaleśa Cāḷukya and dedicated in CE 578. Inside the cave, on the left side of the veranda, Viṣṇu is shown on Śeṣa. Somewhat unusually, the god is depicted in a seated position rather than lying down. On the wall immediately flanking Viṣṇu is an image of Varāha (Figure 24). The cave's inscription, engraved just next to the Varāha, records that the main image was consecrated and donations made on *mahākārttikapaurṇamāsa* (i.e., the full moon day in the month of Kārttika).[72] The significance of this timing is shown by popular Vaiṣṇava calendars listing key festival days. Although the "waking day" changes each year against the Gregorian system,



24 Bādāmi (District Bagalkot, Karnataka). Cave 3, nineteenth-century drawing showing Viṣṇu and Varāha, dated by inscription CE 578. *Courtesy of the British Museum.*

it always takes place four days before the full moon in Kārttika. The *vaikuṇṭhacaturdaśī*, a festival sacred to Viṣṇu as Vaikuṇṭha, falls on the eve of the full moon. So the Vaiṣṇava ritual cycle and the day given in the Bādāmi inscription demonstrate that the seated figure in Cave 3 is none other than Viṣṇu Vaikuṇṭha and, more importantly, that this image represents Viṣṇu in his first days of wakefulness, that is, between the *utthānaikādaśī* and the *kārttikapaurṇamāsa*.[73] After Viṣṇu has stirred fully from his slumbers, he assumes his active incarnate forms. The most important of these for our concerns is Varāha. And this incarnation is placed, as just noted, immediately beside the seated Viṣṇu. The material at Bādāmi thus confirms our hypothesis that the Varāha at Udayagiri represents the woken god.

After Viṣṇu's "waking day" in Kārttika, the rains have normally stopped throughout north and central India. At Udayagiri, during the Gupta period at least, the Varāha would have stood ankle-deep in water – a fitting announcement that the god has indeed risen from his watery sleep. Varāha is also shown in triumphant control of the waters for he holds down their personification, the serpent king, with his foot (Figure 23). So aside from the mythological

dimensions, the waters from which Varāha rescues the earth are first and foremost the Monsoon rains. If excessive, the Monsoon will flood the earth and ruin the winter crop. The reality in India is that too much water is just as bad as too little; both are undesirable, and both, as Derrett has explained, were the king's responsibility in ancient days.[74] These considerations leave little doubt that the sculptures of Nārāyaṇa and Varāha at Udayagiri were conceived as a pair, that the images were iconographic indicators of the sleeping and waking of Viṣṇu and, finally, that the two were physically positioned so the rising sun would accentuate their calendrical and ritual significance.

Beyond the annual cycle and attendant observances, the images of Nārāyaṇa and Varāha can be linked by Purāṇic theories of time in a framework of cosmic ages. We have noted already how the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes Āditya as presiding over the present "interval of Manu" and how this confirmed Candragupta as *vikramāditya*, the king who is the sun of prowess. In addition to "intervals of Manu," the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* gives a detailed account of the aeons or *kalpa*-s. Although these aeons cycle round endlessly and forever, the text is clear about where we stand presently in the system. The previous *kalpa*, the aeon that has just closed, was the *Padmakalpa* and belonged to Nārāyaṇa. The present age, the one in which we live, is the *kalpa* of Varāha.[75] In terms of cosmic time, then, the iconographic and epigraphic programme at Udayagiri is at once cosmological and political: the movement from the darkness of the past into the blazing light of the present moment is a movement where each step is sign-posted by divine images and royal metaphors. The steps move inexorably toward the Varāha, which announces a new dispensation in a new age. And the Varāha, like the other images but only more so, is allegorical in purpose.

## 1.7. VARĀHA IN HISTORIOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

That the Varāha might be read as a political metaphor was first suggested by K. P. Jayaswal in a stimulating article published in 1932.[76] Drawing together diverse sources, Jayaswal correctly noted that Rāmagupta's reign fell just before that of Candragupta II. He further recognised that because Rāmagupta's time was marred by political failures it was expunged from the official epigraphic accounts of the Gupta dynasty.[77] In addition to these historical observations, Jayaswal described how he visited Udayagiri in the winter of 1931 and suddenly saw "the whole scheme . . . as one piece of architectural design." Recalling the closing eulogy of Viśākhadatta's *Mudrārākṣasa*, he proposed that the sculptor of the Varāha panel was inspired by the poet's imagery and used the opportunity to create a visual *śleṣa* that matched the double meanings embedded in Viśākhadatta's text.[78] After Jayaswal, a number of writers have touched the subject of political metaphor at Udayagiri, but a survey of the relevant publications shows serious academic flaws. Subsequent authors, to judge from

their citation apparatus, have failed to work through earlier writing in a methodical fashion, have frequently put forward interpretations without due acknowledgement, and have been content to make or repeat assertions without testing the validity of their proposals against the primary and secondary evidence. These problems necessitate an historiographic review to help us judge the degree to which the key issues have been properly researched, analysed, and interpreted.

As just noted, Jayaswal initiated the discussion of the Udayagiri Varāha as a political metaphor in his provocative 1932 essay. After him the issue was taken up by V. S. Agrawala in his study of the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[79] Agrawala gave a detailed and useful commentary on the sacrificial terminology used to describe Varāha and, in characteristic fashion, discoursed on the incarnation in a way that inclines toward Hindu apologetics and theosophy. Agrawala then commented that Candragupta's conquests were "an extraordinary achievement, almost superhuman, which only the Emperor was able to accomplish because he represented the glory of Mahā-varāha, the Primeval Boar. This idea caught the imagination of the people. The political inspiration and the metaphysical conception agreed well with each other."[80] On the side panels flanking the Varāha, Agrawala saw a continuation of the political theme in the relief carvings of Gaṅgā and Yamunā (Figure 25). These were "exactly a picture of Antarvedi or Madhyadeśa, the homeland of the Gupta empire." Finally he identified, for the first time, the kneeling figure at the base of the panel, saying, "At one end stands a royal figure who seems to be the Emperor himself, viz., Chandragupta, politically identified with Mahāvarāha and referred to as 'deva' by his contemporaries since he made the country free from foreign domination of the Śakas." Some of these ideas certainly came from Jayaswal, but Agrawala cited neither him nor the *Mudrārākṣasa*.[81] Finally Agrawala concluded with a section on the achievements of Candragupta Vikramāditya, summarising his conquests "up to the ocean (*mahodadhi*)", his great "consolidation of territory (*dharaṇibandha*)" and, citing Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*, Candragupta's system of "peaceful alliance" whereby subdued kings were restored to autonomy and sovereignty (*prasvāpana*).

The next writer to touch the question of metaphorical imagery was S. R. Goyal in his *History of the Imperial Guptas*, published in 1967. Although Goyal was primarily a political historian who did not concern himself with the religious and visual culture of the Gupta age, his work has been influential and is still much read, in part because of his combative opinions and engaging literary style. Particularly important for our concerns was his location of the Gupta homeland in eastern Uttar Pradesh and his view that Prayāga was the capital. After a discussion of these issues, Goyal remarked: "The suggestion that Prayāga was the centre of the original Gupta state beautifully explains the popularity of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā motif in the Gupta age."[82] Apparently he considered this to be an issue of peripheral importance, making the observation

25 Udayagiri. Cave 5, detail of side panel showing river goddesses (above) and Varuṇa holding a vase (below).

without mentioning V. S. Agrawala whose work he knew well and cited frequently. Goyal was equally brief on the likening of Candragupta to Varāha in the *Mudrārākṣasa*. He ventured only to say that "the Varāha image of the Udayagiri cave, in which an inscription of the reign of Chandragupta II is found, appears to be the sculptural rendering of this idea."[83] The name of Jayaswal was omitted, although we know from his extended discussion of Rāmagupta that Goyal was familiar with Jayaswal's essay on the topic.[84]

If we are disappointed that an historian of Goyal's stature had so little to say about Udayagiri and its imagery, we will not find solace in the way the subject was handled by his contemporaries. I refer to an article by S. V. Sohoni that appeared shortly after Goyal's book.[85] This writer focused on the kneeling figure in the Varāha panel and developed the idea that it was a portrait sculpture of Candragupta II. As we have already seen, this was first suggested by V. S. Agrawala. Sohoni did not cite Agrawala and did not provide any new evidence for the identification other than Gupta coins that showed, in Sohoni's view, a close similarly in the representation of Candragupta. Sohoni's main point was that Pṛthivī is the thematic centre of the relief panel and that all the figures look towards her; the kneeling figure of the king apparently had his arms spread out to receive the goddess in anticipation of the moment when Varāha was going to set her down. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* was used to support this interpretation. Sohoni ends by quoting the closing eulogy of the *Mudrārākṣasa* and Jayaswal's 1932 article verbatim and at length, but exactly how this buttresses his main thesis is unclear. The principle difficulty with Sohoni's article is that while the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* does indeed say that Varāha lifts up the earth and then sets her down, the god is not described as placing Pṛthivī in the hands of a king, but rather on the surface of the waters. And while it is right to think about the identity of the kneeling king at Udayagiri and the position of his missing hand, Sohoni's assertion that the king is Candragupta is unsubstantiated. As to the missing hand, the idea that a king would put out his left hand to receive the earth is simply unbelievable. These weaknesses have relegated the article to well-deserved obscurity.

After a hiatus of ten years, the Varāha was again addressed, this time by art historians in America. In *The Art of Gupta India*, Joanna Williams devoted several pages to the panel and provided a detailed diagram in which all the key images were identified.[86] Her summary of the iconography rested on Debala Mitra's seminal article of 1963.[87] Because Mitra did not pursue the question of how the Varāha might have worked as a political metaphor, Williams went back to Jayaswal. But bibliographic resuscitation did not bring intellectual rehabilitation: after providing a brief summary of Jayaswal's arguments, Williams concluded only that "some parts of this interpretation are strained."[88] From this, Williams turned to the Gaṅgā and Yamunā images on the side of the Varāha panel and the question of how they may have functioned as emblems of Gupta

power. The ideas, directly or indirectly, are those of Agrawala, but Williams does not cite him, as if returning Agrawala's favour of noncitation to Jayaswal. On the river goddesses Williams wrote: "the theme [i.e., Gaṅgā and Yamunā] was thrust into prominence for reasons other than religious and mythological ones. If the two rivers defined the heartland of the Gupta empire, as Goyal in particular has argued, their appearance at Udayagiri would form another reminder of Gupta political power. Such a topical and propagandistic interpretation of an Indian work of art may seem heretical. Yet a connection between ruler and deity was common in Southeast Asia and probably had Indian sources. This suggestion would explain the particular combination of themes in the Udayagiri relief."[89] As these lines show, Williams was not prepared to accept that religious imagery could or should carry political meaning. Her discomfort with this form of analysis was particularly highlighted by a lack of any discussion of the votive figures at the foot of the Varāha. Although Debala Mitra had already suggested these might be donors, Williams did not care to take up the issue, indeed the votive figures were conveniently omitted from her keyed iconographic drawing!

Shortly after the appearance of *The Art of Gupta India*, Fredrick M. Asher published an article on political and historical allegory in Gupta art.[90] This article, one of the first manifestations in the American camp of the trend toward contextualisation, argued that the Varāha image at Udayagiri functioned as a "lithic allegory" in which myth served as "an analogy to a real-life person or event, usually making that person or event more vivid, poignant, or dramatic."[91] Citing Agrawala and expanding eloquently on his arguments, Asher suggested that the "Udayagiri relief was inspired by Candra Gupta's conquests and also served as an allegory for his victory," thereby providing a "cosmic perspective to the historical event." Pursuing the logic of his position, Asher suggested that the figures in Kuṣāṇa costume behind the Varāha represented not only the sages who took refuge in Viṣṇu but also "the local kings like the patrons of the relief who paid homage to the paramount Gupta sovereign."[92] Although he does not say as much, Asher is here referring to the inscription in Cave 6 and assuming that this inscription records the establishment of the entire cave complex including the Varāha. This is, of course, a debatable assumption, but accepting for the moment that it is the case, we might have expected Asher to have argued that the kneeling figures at the bottom of the relief represented one or other of the princes mentioned in the Cave 6 inscription. But Asher, like Williams, sidesteps the votive figures and moves directly to the images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. These rivers "flow though the Gupta heartland; more significantly, they have their confluence at Prayāga which has been recently identified [i.e., by Goyal] as the capital of the Gupta Empire." Pursuing this course to its logical end, Asher commented that "on one level the ocean toward which these united rivers flow represents *ekārṇava*, the primaeval ocean from which Varāha

rescued the earth. But as the Sanskrit word for ocean is *samudra*, the ocean may here also recall Samudra Gupta . . . the monarch who essentially established the Gupta empire." Again we might have expected Asher to have extrapolated from these points to tell us that the votive figure at the base of the relief was Samudragupta. But this would have destroyed the symmetry of the analogy: if Candragupta rose from Samudragupta and Candragupta is Varāha, then the *ekārṇava* has to be Samudragupta. From Udayagiri, Asher continued to the Varāha at Eran, made in the time of the Hūṇa ruler Toramāṇa. Here he interpreted the inscription incised on the image as recording an allegory for Toramāṇa's usurpation of Gupta authority. The interpretation is unfortunately flawed by a misunderstanding of the epigraphic text. It does not record the "strength of Toramāṇa and his family" but that of a local ruler; all we are actually told of Toramāṇa is that he was of great fame and lustre (*pṛthukīrttau pṛthudyutau*). So while it might be possible to argue a connection between the image and the king, it cannot be along the lines that Asher suggested. Leaving aside the Gupta period, Asher moved into the seventh century and beyond, making a series of suggestions about political metaphors in sculpture that do not concern us here and that have, in any case, been pursued by subsequent art historians.[93]

A remarkable feature of the writing described to this point is the degree to which it developed without reference to coeval European scholarship on directly related questions. The earliest work touching our theme was Odette Viennot's *Les divinités fluviales*, published in 1964.[94] This provided comprehensive photographic documentation of Gaṅgā and Yamunā images on north Indian temples and developed a relative chronology of them using the typological method favoured by French scholars such as G. Jouveau-Dubreuil and Philippe Stern. The methods and chronology do not concern us here; the main issue is that Viennot proposed that the river goddesses served a political purpose. Developing ideas first put forward by V. S. Agrawala, Viennot urged that because the Gangetic *doāb* formed the heartland of the Gupta empire, "le culte des divinités fluviales revêtait probablement un caractère tutélaire et même dynastique."[95] As emblems of imperial hegemony, Gaṅgā and Yamunā were used to show respect for the Guptas within their territory; beyond the Gupta frontier they became symbols of the kind of power that later kings sought to appropriate as a way of affirming their own claims.[96] To substantiate these ideas, Viennot noted how the seventh-century prince Vijayāditya Cāḷukya led a victorious campaign to the north and returned with the river goddesses and other royal insignia.[97] These "précieux trophées" were taken over by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and, subsequently, the eastern Cāḷukyas.

Viennot's analysis is compelling, but it attracted a severe critique from Heinrich von Stietencron.[98] His work surveyed the mythology and symbolism of the river goddesses in a comprehensive way, but he was not prepared to

accept Viennot's political iconology. Although von Stietencron's attempt to dismantle Viennot's case is forcefully stated, there are fundamental problems inherent in his case, and we are obliged, as a result, to summarise von Stietencron's key points, adding counterarguments and refutations at each step. (1) The *doāb*, according to von Stietencron, was not the homeland or heartland of the Guptas, their capital being Pāṭaliputra and their ancestral seat Magadha. Thus, Gaṅgā and Yamunā could hardly have served as emblems of the Gupta homeland. This argument cannot be accepted. The heartland of the Gupta kings is an open question and, as noted already, historians have put forward several suggestions regarding the Gupta "capital."[99] In all likelihood, the Guptas had a number of royal centres and used different places for different purposes. But in some ways, the homeland and capital of the Guptas is a side issue; more significant is the Madhyadeśa or "middle region," the conceptual centre of the Indian geographical universe in, for example, the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (2: 21–23). The rightly ordered dispensation of that region was something which the Guptas sought to uphold and propagate; the images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā could thus have been used by the Guptas to signal this purpose.[100] (2) The history of the Guptas, according to von Stietencron, shows that during their heyday there was no iconographic differentiation between the two goddesses and further that when Gaṅgā and Yamunā were at last distinguished, the Guptas had ceased to be a major power. This is completely incorrect. Although figures on early temple doors are certainly hard to distinguish, there is no doubt that the two river goddesses were clearly understood and differentiated at Udayagiri and Ahicchatra.[101] In addition we might note how the *Kumārasambhava* describes Gaṅgā and Yamunā as taking visible form as attendants of the god; this surely describes a temple.[102] (3) The earliest attempt to distinguish the two river goddesses, according to von Stietencron, is at Ajaṇṭā, and this was outside the sphere of Gupta political influence. This is simply wrong. Regardless of the date we assign to the relevant portions of Ajaṇṭā, they are clearly later than Udayagiri. Additionally, the political position of the Vākāṭakas can be safely judged to be one of subordinate alliance to the Guptas; the cultural apparatus of the Deccan during their time can be similarly judged as resting on northern precedent. (4) The trophies brought back to the Deccan by the Cāḷukyas, according to von Stietencron, were probably standards of war rather than sculptures. Had they been images, placed before a temple as a sign and symbol of newly acquired Cāḷukya hegemony, then it stands to reason that there would have been no statues of Gaṅgā and Yamunā in the Cāḷukya kingdom before this time. Yet already the images are present at Bādāmi and Aihole, showing they were used earlier without political importance being attached to them. This argument is not logical. The presence of river goddesses at Bādāmi and Aihole could have signalled an early aspiration that the Cāḷukyas were only able to achieve in later times. Additionally, and more significantly,

whatever the actual appearance of the river "trophies," they were sufficiently charged with political meaning for the Cāḷukyas to bring them to the Deccan with the royal drums and banners.[103] Even the Cōḷas felt obliged to make a raid northward to the Gaṅgā and bring back the holy waters to Tamil Nadu. So although Gaṅgā and Yamunā were integral to the cosmological symbolism of the northern temple, at another level they retained political meaning, even in Tamil Nadu where river goddesses are not normally included in the architectural programme. (5) On some of the gold coins of Samudragupta and Kumāragupta there is a female on a *makara*; without a legend this cannot, according to von Stietencron, be confidently said to be Yamunā. The Gupta capital was at Pāṭaliputra, and as this was on the Gaṅgā, it seems unlikely that the Yamunā was part of the religio-political vocabulary of the Guptas. This argument is flawed. We have already dealt with the capital city and iconographic questions in (1) and (2). As far as the geo-political vocabulary of the Guptas is concerned, there is absolutely no doubt that the Yamunā was part of it. In the Eran inscription of Budhagupta, the Yamunā is specifically named as the river that marked the northern frontier of lands controlled by a subordinate of the Gupta king.[104] Areas to the north of the Yamunā were probably under direct royal control. Given these several points, we are obliged to reject von Stietencron's arguments and, more especially, to dismiss his attempt to dismantle Viennot's political reading of river-goddess imagery.

A second scholar in Germany, Adalbert J. Gail, was also studying iconographic questions in the 1970s, working specifically on a detailed structural analysis of the textual accounts and sculptural representations of Varāha.[105] As regards political metaphor, Gail concluded that Varāha, Narasiṃha, and Trivikrama were the preferred *avatāra*-s for sculptural representation and that "diese drei, so scheint es, waren besonders geeignet, Identifizierungsprozesse bei indischen Fürsten, Stiftern von Tempeln und Bildwerken, auszulösen."[106] To explain how this identification process might have worked, Gail pointed to the *Mudrārākṣasa*, identifying Viśākhadatta as a contemporary or courtier of Candragupta II and the Varāha image at Udayagiri as "eine Illustration des Dichterworts." The analysis is succinct and Gail seems to have arrived at this conclusion without recourse to the writing of K. P. Jayaswal. Gail was, in any case, willing to accept that Vaiṣṇava imagery could have a socio-political dimension.

Shortly after Gail's article appeared, von Stietencron began to revisit the problem of politics and religious imagery. His later publications on this subject display a remarkable *volte face*.[107] Conceding that Indian sculpture represented rather more than Hindu pietism, von Stietencron began to argue that the choice of a particular image and the processes by which it was selected were often "to be traced in contemporary political events."[108] These links, however, are often hard to find because veiled allusion and the play on hidden meaning have long

been valued in the Indian tradition. To illustrate these ideas, von Stietencron had recourse to several examples, among them the Varāha at Udayagiri. To this he devoted several pages, the thrust of his argument being that the Varāha was a political metaphor inspired by Candragupta's victory over the Śakas or Western Kṣatrapas. Taking an interpretative stance that was clearly in the Indian nationalist camp, von Stietencron suggested that Candragupta took the title *vikramāditya* after his wars had removed "the last vestige of foreign domination from the soil of Western India. The powerful barbarians (*mleccha*) rulers who had seized the earth and drowned her, as it were, in the flood of foreign invaders. Now under a legitimate king, the Hindu *dharma* and the sacrifices to the gods could be restored."[109] These ideas were extrapolated from those of V. S. Agrawala whom von Stietencron acknowledges as the first scholar to note that the Varāha myth matched the political situation of the moment. The "flattering equation of king and god" was shown by "the concluding verse of Viśākhadatta's drama *Mudrārākṣasa* which, while dealing with events of the time of Candragupta Maurya, refers indirectly also to Candragupta II, who was the poet's contemporary and may have been his patron."[110]

As will be evident from our survey of the relevant literature, these points do not represent new ideas or new data. But with this information in hand, von Stietencron went on to suggest, using numismatic evidence, that the Varāha should be later than the Cave 6 inscription of 401. This is because the coins show – at least in von Stietencron's understanding of them – that Gupta control of western India happened more towards 410, a fact that suggests the Varāha should have been carved about eight years later than is generally supposed.[111] The possibility that the Varāha was commemorative is taken, especially given that the recumbent Nārāyaṇa, as we have already seen, may also have been made in memory of a particular event or ritual. More interesting and significant for our purposes is von Stietencron's observation that the identification of king and god was "not simply the flattering talk of eager panegyrists" but formed part of an ideology of divine kingship documented by records like the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Picking up a theme first explored by Asher, von Stietencron suggests that the word *samudra* has a special meaning and that the play on words here assumed a plastic form: "Just as Varāha issuing from the mighty *samudra* rescued the earth from *asura* oppression, even so did Candragupta II issuing from his mighty father Samudragupta rescue the earth from *asura* (i.e., Western Kṣatrapa) oppression. The person with the water-pot standing in the ocean, has thus a double meaning. He is the ocean in anthropomorphic form, but he is also an image of Candragupta's father Samudragupta." Again the point is taken but von Stietencron, like Asher, is trapped in the logic of his own argument: If Candragupta is represented by Varāha and Candragupta arose from Samudragupta, then the ocean or *samudra* has to represent Samudragupta. To preserve the proposition's symmetrical

elegance, the votive figures at the base of the relief have to be side-stepped. As von Stietencron's stated aim was the political context of images, and as the votive figures a priori should have had a fairly significant political role, the failure to discuss them means that the interpretation of the Varāha relief is far from a closed subject.[112]

The ways in which Udayagiri offers unsolved historical problems is highlighted by an article published by Giovanni Verardi in 1982.[113] In this important but seldom-cited work, Verardi sought to reevaluate Soviet excavations of the temples at Pendźikent in Central Asia. In the course of this reevaluation, Verardi was brought to an important question by Belenickij's interpretation of Pendźikent, namely the source that inspired the Varāha panel. Given that the Guptas appropriated Kuṣāṇa portraiture for coinage and, one presumes, other aspects of Kuṣāṇa ceremony, it seems that Verardi was almost certainly correct when he suggested that the typological source of the Udayagiri panel can be found in shrines like Pendźikent that were dedicated to water deities. As to the identification of the votive figure at the foot of the Udayagiri Varāha, Verardi commented only that "Il dio poggia il piede sinistro sulle spire del serpente Śeṣa, che gli rende omaggio insieme con alcuni altri personaggi, fra cui un principe (?), forse Samudragupta."[114] Unfortunately, Verardi chose not to pursue this question; neither has he pursued the key issue of Kuṣāṇa influence on the Guptas in his ground-breaking studies of early Indian kingship and its iconography.[115]

## 1.8. NĀRĀYAṆA, NARASIṂHA, VARĀHA, AND KṢITIBHUJ

The degree to which the Varāha image merits reexamination is demonstrated by the foregoing survey of the secondary literature, which, if little else, highlights the limited focus, circularity, and empirical limitations of scholarship to date. This draws us back to one of the main themes of this chapter, namely our attempt to show that a coherent cosmological, religious, and political programme informs the images, inscriptions, and shrines at Udayagiri. As we have noted already, Nārāyaṇa, Nṛsiṃha, and Varāha can be linked in various ways: through the flow of water and the position of water bodies, through the annual cycle of the seasons and its ritual reenactment, through the passage of cosmic time and the mythic events marking that time. The system of aeons connects Nārāyaṇa and Varāha in an especially close way: Nārāyaṇa belongs to the *kalpa* that has just closed and is forever past, while Varāha presides over the present age. In the annual cycle, too, Nārāyaṇa and Varāha are intimately linked: Nārāyaṇa represents Viṣṇu's formless sleep during the rainy season, while Varāha represents Viṣṇu's dynamic awakening in the month of Kārttika. These meanings, and the political metaphors that can be associated with them, are reinforced by the configuration of Udayagiri and the epigraphic texts that were

incised on the hill at key places. All this we have described in the foregoing sections of this chapter. Beyond this, we should note additional evidence that tells us about the state of Vaiṣṇava theology in the fifth century. Particularly informative is the Eran inscription of Toramāṇa that opens with this praise of Varāha.[116]

> jayati dharaṇyuddharaṇe
> ghanaghoṇāghātaghūrṇṇitamahīddhraḥ
> devo varāhamūrtis trailokyamahāgṛhastambhaḥ.
>
> Victorious is the Lord in the form of Varāha!
> Who in the act of lifting up the earth caused the
> mountains to tremble with the blows of his hard snout,
> Who is the supporting pillar for the great house that is
> the three worlds.

In the closing lines of the same inscription, we find the temple described: It is a "stone shrine of Nārāyaṇa the holy one who has the form of Varāha and is the final refuge of the world."[117] This statement shows that Nārāyaṇa was conceived as the primal being from whom the form or *mūrti* of Varāha has come. This is precisely the theology of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 4: 7–8), which reports that Nārāyaṇa concluded that "the earth lay within the waters, and desiring to raise her up, created another form for that purpose: and as in preceding *kalpa*-s he assumed the shape of a fish or a tortoise, so in this he took the form of a boar." Similarly in the *Matsya Purāṇa* (248: 12–55), the earth goddess praises Varāha as Nārāyaṇa, even addressing him directly using this name. And Pṛthivī declares all creation to rest in him. None of this is very surprising, at least from the point of view of the Vaiṣṇava belief system. We cover this ground only to show that the Vaiṣṇava images at Udayagiri have a definable relationship with each other and, more generally, that the theology we now find in the *Viṣṇu* and *Matsya Purāṇa* was prevalent in central India when the images were being made.

The foregoing material is enough to show that Nārāyaṇa is the theological starting point for the iconographic programme at Udayagiri just as Varāha is its end-point and culmination. But aside from the cosmological relationships that can be established between the images, the sculptures can also be compared on the basis of specific compositional features. At the base of the Nārāyaṇa and Varāha panels, there are, as we have seen, votive figures, each of them kneeling and each with a small male attendant standing behind. That the figure below Nārāyaṇa is probably Candragupta II has already been discussed. The votive figure below Varāha has also been identified as Candragupta, at least by V. S. Agrawala and those following his views. This identification, if accepted without qualification, creates some logical difficulties when juxtaposed with the opinion that the Varāha is a political metaphor. The problem is this: if the votive figure at the base of the panel is Candragupta and the Varāha is a metaphorical

representation of Candragupta, then the whole scene would seem to show the king worshipping himself. This does not seem to be entirely satisfactory, at least when phrased in such a blunt manner. So who is the votive figure at the base of the Varāha panel?

Answering this question has a direct bearing on our understanding of kingship and authority in the Gupta period, a point that, rather remarkably, has not been taken up by scholars to date. That the Guptas had Vaiṣṇava leanings has long been known; what has not been noticed is that this relationship is explicitly visualised in the Varāha panel. Our argument, to anticipate, is that the imagery has more than one meaning and that the votive figure, and indeed also the Varāha, can be read as several individuals simultaneously. The starting point for this interpretation is the inscription in Cave 6. This reads as follows:[118]

> siddham saṃvatsare 80 [+] 2 āṣāḍhamāsaśuklaikādaśyām
> paramabhaṭṭārakamahārājādhi[rāja*]śrīcandra[gu]pta-
> pādānuddhyātasya mahārājachagalagapautrasya
> mahārājaviṣṇudāsaputrasya sanakānikasya mahā[rāja*]
> [soḍha?*[119]]lasyāyaṃ deyadharmmaḥ[120]
>
> Success! In the year 82 on the eleventh lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha. This is the *deyadharma* of *mahārāja* Soḍhala (?), the Sanakānika, the son of *mahārāja* Viṣṇudāsa, the grandson of *mahārāja* Chagalaga, who meditates on the feet of the *paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja śrī* Candragupta.

The importance of this record for understanding the site has already drawn attention. The month and date show, to repeat, that Cave 6 was consecrated on the festival day when Viṣṇu was put to sleep at the beginning of the rainy season. Turning to the rest of the record, we are immediately confronted with a problem of terminology. The inscription recounts the granting or making of a *deyadharma,* but the limited compass of this word in the Brāhmaṇical setting has led to an impoverished discussion of the epigraph's primary purpose.[121] Aside from several bricks at Pawāyā that were part of an early fifth-century Vaiṣṇava temple and that carry inscriptions recording them to the *deyadharma* of various individuals, the only working definition of the term is provided by an early Aulikara stone inscription.[122] The relevant line runs as follows: "Being adverse to injustice, that one [i.e., *rājasthānīya* Bhagavaddoṣa] built assembly halls, wells, monasteries, gardens, temples to the gods and other *deyadharma*-s."[123] Before the Gupta period, *deyadharma* had a long history in Buddhism, the closest example to Udayagiri appearing on the pedestal of a sculpture at Sānchī. This is dated Kuṣāṇa year 28 (CE 154).[124] The *deyadharma* in this instance was the image of the Bodhisattva on which the record was engraved. Based on these examples, the *deyadharma* at Udayagiri – the thing that had the "quality" (*dharma*) that

made it fit "to be given" (*deya*) – was evidently the image inside Cave 6 and perhaps also the surrounding cave-shrine in which that image was installed.[125]

More crucial for our concerns is the phrase *śrīcandraguptapādānudhyāta*, "mediating on the feet of Śrī Candragupta." Now if we accept that a parallel was being drawn between the king and Varāha, then this inscription seems to be telling us that the figure at the base of the relief is the Sanakānika prince, mediating, as the Cave 6 inscription directly tell us, on the feet of Candragupta.[126] This provides a fitting hierarchy: the prince who made Cave 6 and installed its image also commissioned the panel showing his monarch in Vaiṣṇava guise; in that panel, the Sanakānika depicted himself as the respectful donor.

In terms of direct evidence, this is the most obvious and compelling explanation, but there are reasons for thinking that both the votive figure and the Varāha represent rather more than this. Although the name of our Sanakānika donor is lost in the inscription – Soḍhala is Sircar's reconstruction – his father's name is legible and reads Viṣṇudāsa. This Viṣṇudāsa lived in the fourth century and was therefore the regional ruler who submitted to Samudragupta.[127] A clay sealing with Viṣṇudāsa's name, dateable to the fourth century, was published by E. J. Rapson in 1901.[128] We also find Viṣṇudāsa mentioned in the *Mudrārākṣasa*, a play that alludes to events in the early Gupta court.[129] Now Samudragupta, as we know from the posthumous Allahābād *praśasti*, was described by his panegyrist Hariṣena as "an inconceivable *puruṣa*, the cause of the destruction of evil and creation of good." The poet concluded his laud by saying that Samudragupta's deeds were worthy of being praised for a long time and that he was "a *deva* dwelling in the world, mortal only in the performance of worldly rites."[130] These remarkable statements leave little doubt that Samudragupta's posthumous identity was manufactured by drawing parallels between his person and his acts and those of the godhead. The inscriptions do not explicitly say that Samudragupta is Viṣṇu, but by using the name Viṣṇudāsa (i.e., the "slave of Viṣṇu"), the Sanakānika prince was making a deliberately suggestive statement. Should we seek further clarification, parallels between Samudragupta and Varāha can be found in the epigraphic descriptions of each. To take some examples: Just as Varāha is described in the Eran inscription as lifting up the earth, so Samudragupta is described as binding the earth together through the expansion of his mighty arms.[131] And just as Varāha is described in the Eran inscription as the pillar upholding the great house that is the three worlds, so Samudragupta is described as having a tranquil fame that was based on his reinstatement of royal houses fallen and deprived of sovereignty.[132]

Continuing along this route, we can point to parallels between the Allahābād *praśasti* and the constitution of the king's person as described in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 7: 4–6. Manu states that eternal particles or measures (*mātrā*) are extracted from Indra, Vāyu, Yama, Sūrya, Agni, Varuṇa, Candra, and Kubera and that the king is assembled from these materials (*surendrāṇāṃ*

*mātrābhyo nirmito nṛpaḥ*). He is thus worthy of respect even though he appears to be a mere human. Beside this, we can juxtapose the Allahābād inscription of Hariṣena, which says that the king is "equal to Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra and Yama."[133] While the list of gods is condensed by half – Vāyu, Sūrya, Agni, Candra are omitted – the epigraphic account is remarkably close to the teaching of Manu, especially because the king is defined as human only to the extent that he is seen performing worldly acts. What the four gods were supposed to give the king is indicated in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*: "Indra sent showers of rain, Yama checked the rising tendency of disease, Varuṇa had his watery paths safe for the work of mariners; Kubera too increased his treasury."[134] From here, the relationship to Varāha is one small step: among all the forms of Viṣṇu, Varāha is unique in having the gods assembled in his body.

Having made these points, and avoiding yet more that would add bulk to our text but little to its substance, we can see a double meaning emerging around the votive figure at the base of the Varāha panel. The image is not only the Sanakānika prince who was ruling in the time of Candragupta and mediating on his king's feet, but simultaneously his father Viṣṇudāsa who was ruling under Samudragupta. That the Varāha might be a metaphorical representation of Samudragupta is supported by the simple matter of his name: "protected by the ocean." Gupta inscriptions picked up on this by describing Samudragupta as a monarch whose "fame was tasted by the waters of the four oceans."[135] So just as the Varāha rose from the *ekārṇava* and was surrounded by the waters, so Samudragupta conquered the world up to the seas and was thereby surrounded and protected by them. The association of Varāha and Samudragupta helps explain the prominent *nāga* figure on which the Varāha places his foot: On the level of mythology, this is an emblem of the god's supremacy over the waters; on the level of political allegory, this is a justification for Samudragupta's well-known suppression of the Nāga kings who rose up against him in the fourth century.

If the metaphorical reading of Varāha as Samudragupta has to be constructed from indirect and incomplete evidence, the matter is clearer when it comes to Candragupta. The closing eulogy of the *Mudrārākṣasa* spells out the similarity of god and king rather directly: just as the earth sought refuge in Varāha of old, so now, terrified by barbarians, she shelters in arms of Candragupta. Here I quote the translation of J. A. B. van Buitenen:[136]

> tathāpīdam astu bharatavākyam |
> vārāhīm ātmayones tanum avanavidhāv āsthitasyānurūpāṃ
> yasya prāgdantakoṭīṃ pralayaparigatā śiśriye bhūtadhātrī |
> mlecchair udvijyamānā bhujayugam adhunā saṃśritā rājamūrteḥ
> sa śrīmad bandhubhṛtyaś ciram avatu mahīṃ pārthivaś candraguptaḥ ||
>
> But still this wish may be fulfilled:
> The Self-begotten God did once assume

The fitting body of a mighty Boar,
And on his snout did save the troubled Earth,
Nurse of all beings, when she was deluged:
Now, terrified by the barbarian hordes,
She has sought shelter in our king's strong arms:
May Candragupta, our most gracious king,
Whose people prosper and whose kinsmen thrive,
For long continue to protect the land!

This is the most stylish version of these verses published to date, but van Buitenen's "trans-creation" has cast an elegant veil over many aspects of the terminology. Before turning to this terminology, we need to digress and resolve some of the questions that have been raised about the king's name in the last line of the eulogy. This problem is taken up in the next section; those already satisfied that the best reading is indeed "Candragupta" can pass directly to Section 1.10.

## 1.9. CANDRAGUPTA OR AVANTIVARMAN?

In his edition and translation of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, M. R. Kale provided a balanced review of the evidence regarding the king's name in the closing eulogy of the play preferring, in the final analysis, Candragupta over Avantivarman.[137] The reading *avantivarmā* that appears in some manuscripts would place the work in the second half of the sixth century if that name is taken to mean Avantivarman of the Maukhari dynasty.[138] While this is not implausible, the reading *candragupta* has more authority. It is found, firstly, in the learned commentary of Ḍhuṇḍhi, a savant who lived in Svāmimalai, near Kumbhakonam, in the early eighteenth century.[139] While Ḍhuṇḍhi is both southern and late, his work shows that the reading *candragupta* enjoyed wide geographical distribution. The reading is also found in the oldest manuscripts, the most antique being a palm-leaf copy in the University Library, Cambridge (Add 2116).[140] In this manuscript the reading *candragupta* is unambiguous. The colophon provides the date [Nevārī] saṃvat 496 (CE 1374–75). Hillebrandt, who made a careful study of available copies and whose judgement cannot be dismissed lightly, considered the Cambridge manuscript to be very valuable and copied from a very good text.[141] The reading *candragupta* is also found in a manuscript of saṃvat 1571 that maintains a number of special Prakrit forms. The point is that copyists tend to regularise and correct, so manuscripts that are old and preserve seeming irregularities carry great weight: *proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua*. On these grounds, I am reasonably confident that *candragupta* is the best reading. Yet we find this conclusion questioned on account of the *mleccha*-s mentioned in the eulogy, the argument being that the appearance of these characters in the drama cannot predate the mention of *mleccha*-s in the

inscriptions of Skandagupta.[142] This, we are urged to believe, shows that reading *candragupta* is somehow faulty or incorrect.[143]

This style of reasoning regarding the term *mleccha* in the *Mudrārākṣasa* is not scientific: it assumes that the word *mleccha* refers to the Hūṇas alone, that Skandagupta had a monopoly on the term, and that *mleccha* cannot allude to contemporary people or events before the word was used in Skandagupta's inscriptions. But of course the term has a long history and was used to label many types of outsiders from an early time.[144] The *mleccha* kings in the body of the *Mudrārākṣasa* are stated to be from Kulūta, Malaya, Saindhava, and Pārsīka.[145] This appears to be a circle of enemies surrounding the Gupta dominion, an inversion of the ideal circle that the *cakravartin* seeks to build around himself. This is especially clear in the narrative summary given in the *Mudrārākṣasanāṭakakathā*.[146] The closing eulogy, should we take the work as a literary whole, refers to these enemies, not the Hūṇas. The arguments of K. H. Dhruva, which have enjoyed some currency, accordingly fall down.[147] Dhruva's point that the eulogy does not normally refer to characters in the play but to the king in whose court the play was performed is reasonable and correct. What he has missed is that there were two Gupta kings named Candragupta: the play could allude to events during the time of Candragupta I (circa CE 319–50) but have been written and performed in the time of Candragupta II (circa CE 375–415). This suits the likely date of some of the personalities mentioned, an issue that has already drawn attention.[148]

## I.10. VARĀHA AND KĀMANDAKI

Having resolved that the closing eulogy of the *Mudrārākṣasa* praises Candragupta, we can turn to the construction of the simile and its use of evocative words to describe the deity and the king. Viṣṇu firstly assumes the *tanu* or "corporeal body" of Varāha, qualified as one that is *anurūpa*, "fitting, appropriate."[149] In contrast, Candragupta is the *rājamūrti* or "kingly form" of the self-existent god. The agent that links the king and Varāha is the earth: *bhūtadhātrī*, the "mother of all creatures." She once resorted to Varāha and now, threatened by barbarians, she seeks refuge in king Candragupta. The term Viśākhadatta used to designate "king" is *pārthiva*, "being in or relating to the earth." This word alludes to the ruler being wed to the earth and to prosperity, traditional conventions that were current in the Gupta period. Thus, Kumāragupta is described as a king who "protected the earth, having held her with his manly hands, namely valour, as if she were his chaste and lawful wife."[150] In an earlier inscription from Eran, we also find Samudragupta coupled with *bhū* and *śrī*.[151] This brings us back to Udayagiri, where the god, the earth, the king, and prosperity are visualised altogether: Varāha has Pṛthivī balanced on his tusk whilst Lakṣmī, lotus-stalk in hand, stands attentively at his side.[152]

Before this triad is the kneeling king. A textual warrant for the representation is given in the opening verse of Kāmandaki's *Nītisāra*.[153]

> yasya prabhāvād bhuvanaṃ śāśvate pathi tiṣṭhati |
> devaḥ sa jayati śrīman daṇḍadhāro mahīpatiḥ ||
>
> Victory to the Lord, he who is possessed of Śrī,
> the husband of the earth, the dispenser of justice,
> By whose majesty the world is set on the eternal path.

Although the *Nītisāra* neatly seals our case on one level, it invokes a set of further problems on another. The key issue is the word "Lord" (*deva*) used in the verse just cited. To what this refers has been variously interpreted. While Viṣṇu is perhaps being described, the commentarial tradition has normally taken *deva* to mean Kāmandaki's king and patron.[154] We could not possibly name the king on this evidence alone – thousands of Indian kings had *deva* as part of their name. Some historical context is provided, however, by subsequent verses in the *Nītisāra*. These celebrate the qualities and achievements of Viṣṇugupta, Kāmandaki's master in polity and statecraft.[155] This Viṣṇugupta was none other than Cāṇakya Kauṭilya, the author of the *Arthaśāstra*.[156] This has implications for the dating of both the *Arthaśāstra* and *Nītisāra*, a question of considerable interest because the chronological horizon of these texts impacts our understanding of the religious and political norms of the Gupta kings.

The likely date of the *Arthaśāstra*, in the first place, is no earlier than the second century CE. This has been demonstrated by the studies of Trautmann and Scharfe, both now classics of Indological scholarship.[157] Whatever the actual date, the text was not cited, and thus not an active and influential work, until the fourth century. These early citations are found in the *Jātakamālā* (fourth century) and *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* (fifth century).[158] The *Nītisāra* also cites the *Arthaśāstra*, so it too cannot predate the fourth or fifth century, an unsurprising conclusion given Kāmandaki's literary style. Now because Kāmandaki openly declares himself to be a disciple of Kauṭilya, it would appear that a generation – something like thirty or forty years – separates the two authors. While these points in themselves do not date either work in absolute terms, a degree of precision is provided by the fact that Candragupta II was known in inscriptions as Deva or Devagupta.[159] If we accept the textual and authorial relationships just mentioned, then this epigraphic evidence suggests that the word *deva* in the opening verse of the *Nītisāra* can be understood as an oblique dedication to Candragupta II. This understanding means that the *Arthaśāstra* was composed three or four decades before the *Nītisāra* (i.e., three or four decades before the reign period of Candragupta II, circa CE 375–415). To rephrase the matter more concisely, the archaeological and textual evidence points to a date in the mid-fourth century for the *Arthaśāstra*.

As is well known, the *Arthaśāstra* speaks of "Candragupta Maurya," an historical impossibility given that the text belongs to the second century CE at best. Side-stepping the literalist tradition of scholarship, which derives mainly from A. L. Basham and which asserts that the text is much older or at least contains "genuine reminiscences" of the Mauryan age, the dating of the *Nītisāra* to the late fourth or early fifth century and *Arthaśāstra* to the mid-fourth shows that the references to Candragupta Maurya can be understood as anachronistic allusions to Candragupta I (circa CE 319–50). This is a point of considerable historical importance. It shows, most crucially, that the early Guptas sought to appropriate the imperial legacy of the Mauryans through conscious anachronism. Apart from the obvious recycling of personal names, the strongest literary evidence for a revival of the Mauryan past is the *Mudrārākṣasa*. The same tendency is documented archaeologically by the lion capital from Udayagiri (Figure 9). This is a close copy of a Mauryan prototype, probably that at Sānchī.[160] This copying and adaptation of objects from the past, at an imperial Gupta site, leaves no doubt that the Guptas knew their history and engaged in a studied revival of Mauryan forms for political purposes. The work is akin to Gothic revival architecture in Europe, an architecture that may look sufficiently Gothic to deceive the amateur, and seem truly Gothic to the pious, but was known by its practitioners to be a revival of old forms for specific ideological and religious purposes.

While the foregoing observations on the date of the *Arthaśāstra* constitute a digression from the main themes of this chapter, the detour is helpful because it illustrates how word-play informed cultural conduct at the Gupta court. Cross-references and double-meanings were everywhere, from grand mythic narratives down to the names of kings and courtiers. Toward the end of the Gupta period, Skandagupta conducted himself like Kṛṣṇa having killed his uncle, while in the early days Candragupta was "protected by the moon" and the talismanic power of Mauryan imperial memory. Samudragupta was "protected by the sea" because his armies had established a dominion that reached its shores. Viṣṇudāsa, the Sanakānika prince, was at once a slave of Viṣṇu and of the Gupta king who moulded himself in that god's image. And Kauṭilya was Viṣṇugupta because he was protected both by Viṣṇu and by his temporal Vaiṣṇava lord.[161] In this courtly culture of obsessive metonymy – and intense political paranoia I have little doubt – we could hardly expect the opening verse of the *Nītisāra* to have a single referent. On the contrary, a single meaning seems generally implausible.

These comments allow us to reconsider the inscription incised on the Varāha at Eran. The key descriptive phrase is: *devo varāhamūrtiḥ*, "the Lord whose form is Varāha."[162] The attentive reader will quickly anticipate the direction of the present argument: If Candragupta was called Deva and Devagupta, and a royal eulogy at the end of a play from the period depicted him as a *rājamūrti* of

the god who assumed the form of Varāha, then an inscription that describes Varāha as *devo varāhamūrtiḥ* was almost certainly making allusions to the king. Of course, the Eran inscription does not belong to the time of Candragupta, but it was made for local rulers who had flourished under the Guptas and whose lineage extended back to Candragupta's time. The learned poet who composed the record must surely have been aware that the words he was using had very particular associations. The concluding point, then, is that during the Gupta period the image of Varāha was associated with the king. More specifically and in relation to Udayagiri, we can draw all the information in this section together to conclude that the Varāha simultaneously represented Samudragupta and Candragupta. The votive figures accordingly represented both Viṣṇudāsa and Soḍhala.

Further meanings of the Varāha image will attract us in due course (Section 1.11), but before turning to that I should test the patience of my readers by citing some supporting evidence that shows the degree to which the Varāha incarnation was connected with the king and his dominion over the earth during the post-Gupta period. Here I will not embark on an encyclopaedic catalogue of later material. Rather I will focus on three examples from different parts of India that, by their wide distribution and varied contexts, show the prevalence of Varāha imagery in the sixth and seventh centuries and that, consequently, suggest the origin of this theme can be traced to the Guptas. Starting in the far south, the relatively recent excavations beside the Shore temple at Māmallapuram are especially notable. On the north side of the building is a circular tank containing a large zoomorphic Varāha. Like Udayagiri, the water in this tank ebbed and flowed with the seasons, periodically immersing the image. Particularly important are the inscriptions on the plinth of the sculpture that give four titles of the Pallava ruler Narasiṃhavarman (i.e., Śrīrājasiṃhaḥ, Śrīraṇajayaḥ, Śrībharaḥ, and Śrīcitrakārmmukaḥ).[163] The association could not be clearer: The titles on the plinth are effectively descriptive labels. The purpose of such labels, an old practice in India, is to clarify a point that might not be clear from the imagery alone. As is often the case in the south, the desire to articulate clearly and precisely, to elaborate and develop themes so there is no doubt about the meaning, makes a point about the Varāha which in earlier and more northern contexts was not deemed necessary.

Turning to the Deccan, Varāha appears frequently in the inscriptions of the Cāḷukya kingdom. As an example, we may take the Āmudālapāḍu plates of Vikramāditya I that date to the mid-seventh century.[164] The record begins, like many Cāḷukya charters, with an account of how the family increased in favour through the grace of the Seven Mothers, obtained prosperity through the protection of Kārttikeya, and overpowered their enemies by the very sight of the Varāha emblem, which they acquired through the grace of Nārāyaṇa. Varāha enjoys a prominent place in the caves at Bādāmi but, more

significantly, the Boar appears on copper-plate seals and coins as the Cāḷukya royal crest.[165]

A third and final example, dating to the seventh century, takes us to the later Gupta kings of eastern India. In the Aphsad inscription, now in the collections of the British Museum, king Ādityasena is recorded as constructing a temple of Viṣṇu.[166] The Viṣṇu mentioned in the inscription has long been regarded as referring to Varāha because an impressive image of this *avatāra* was found on the site.[167] Although the case for a Varāha temple rests solely on this evidence, the supposition that the inscription refers to Varāha is confirmed by the description of Ādityasena as *kṣitibhuj*, "he who enjoys the earth." The use of this term refers back to the custom, established by the imperial Guptas, of describing the king as wed to the earth, the primary sense of the root √*bhuj* being "to enjoy, eat, consume" and thus "to take possession of" or "to enjoy carnally." The king comes to this privilege by paying for his bride, the currency being valour and devotion. Valour brings victory in battle and control of enemy territory; devotion brings the king closer to the god who possesses the earth and who, as a consequence, bestows sanction and legitimacy. To put the matter another way, the king can only assert a right to his territorial conquests by developing a special relationship with the god who incarnated himself to save the earth and who is, as a result, in ontological possession of it.

## I.II. PARAMABHĀGAVATA, YAJAMĀNA, AND RĀJASŪYA

The question of the king's devotion to the godhead brings us to the fact that the Guptas frequently titled themselves *paramabhāgavata*, "the supreme devotee of the Bhagavat (i.e., Viṣṇu)." The use of this title reminds us that our extended discussion of political metaphor at Udayagiri has side-stepped the primary meaning of the Varāha image: it is firstly and most obviously a representation of Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation. And because the Guptas publicly proclaimed themselves to be the supreme devotees of Viṣṇu in their inscriptions and on their coins, it is reasonable to suppose that they also illustrated themselves in this way, that is to say, that the votive figure below the Varāha represents the Gupta king. Precisely which king was intended can be inferred from the fact that Candragupta II was the first ruler to introduce the title *paramabhāgavata*.[168] He is also the king, as we have seen, who seems to be depicted below the image of Nārāyaṇa and whose personal presence is anyway documented at the site by inscriptions. The small figures that stand just behind the kings in both panels can thus be understood as Vīrasena, the minister who came to Udayagiri with Candragupta.[169] This evidence makes a strong case for the votive figures being Candragupta and Vīrasena. For historians of Gupta culture and polity the most important point is that Candragupta styled himself *paramabhāgavata* and displayed this boldly and publicly in sculptural form at Udayagiri.

This conclusion, to state the obvious, is at variance with identifications offered in the preceding pages of this chapter. This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that the images are riddled with double-meaning, a somewhat confusing scenario that can be resolved by recourse to a musical analogy. Specifically, I would like to propose that the various meanings of the Varāha panel might be understood as "variations on a theme." So having reconstructed the basic melody from fragments, I will now rehearse the variations, albeit in the plodding fashion of an amateur: (1) the votive figure, firstly, can be interpreted as Viṣṇudāsa, the Sanakānika prince who lived in the fourth century and submitted to Samudragupta; the Varāha is, accordingly, a metaphorical representation of Samudragupta. (2) Moving to the next register, the votive figure is the Soḍhala, the Sanakānika who lived in the early fifth century; now Varāha is a metaphorical representation of Candragupta. (3) Stepping up to the royal register, the votive figure can be interpreted as Samudragupta, surrounded by the waters that define and protect him; at this level the Varāha can be identified as a projection of Nārāyaṇa, the cosmic beginning of all incarnations. The attendant figure, not identifiable in our first two variations, can now be named as Hariṣena, Samudragupta's panegyrist. (4) Ascending to the final scale, the votive figure is Candragupta who, as *paramabhāgavata*, kneels before his special object of religious attention. He is attended by Vīrasena, the poet-cum-minister who came to Udayagiri with his king.

The final variation is the most dramatic and compelling: like the ecstatic crescendo of a traditional bard, key elements from earlier versions are not set aside but deftly reworked into the new arrangement. So the Sanakānikas are placed (to borrow from Asher) among the princely ranks behind the main image of Varāha. Likewise, Samudragupta is fittingly merged (to borrow from von Stietencron) with the waters of the *ekārṇava*, personified in the four figures of Varuṇa who stand, holding vases, in the midst of the waters (Figure 25).[170] This specific point of interpretation is supported by Hariṣena's *praśasti*, which praises Samudragupta as an equal of Varuṇa and other gods.

The images of Varuṇa are of considerable importance because they provide a point of entry into why the Varāha incarnation was given such prominence at Udayagiri. To state the essence of the matter in a succinct form, the appearance of the Varuṇa figures shows that the water in which they stand, the same water that surrounds the kneeling king and out of which Varāha rises, is not only the cosmic water of Purāṇic myth but the unction fluid of the royal consecration or *rājasūya*. And because Varāha is the embodiment of sacrifice, Varāha is also a theistic vision of the *rājasūya*, one of the seven royal Soma sacrifices.[171]

We can assert these points because the *rājasūya* was termed *varuṇasava*, the "consecration of Varuṇa," a name based on a conception of the unction fluid as Varuṇa sitting in the cosmic waters.[172] Through various ritual idioms, the unction fluid was paired with igneous and aquatic principles – chiefly Agni and

Sūrya on one side and Soma and Candra on the other. Their union, as Heesterman has perceptively noted, engendered the king, making him the centre of the interaction. The royal sacrificer, once anointed with the unction fluid, impersonated Varuṇa; as the *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* states: "the waters are of Varuṇa's nature, anointing him with the waters he has made him identical with Varuṇa."[173] These kinds of identifications were displayed in a dynamic fashion by the "royal chariot drive." In the ritual setting, the chariot drive belonged to rites connected with the passing year, the annual course of the sun being analogised with the king's chariot ride. Moving round the world like the sun, the king renewed the world and at the same time integrated it into his person. Homage was paid to mother-earth before the king alighted; he then donned sandals of boar skin because the boar represents the earth's male partner.[174] Jan Gonda has provided a theoretical framework that sums up these matters with inimitable precision:[175]

> The phenomenal year primarily was the space of time in which primordial mythical time is made present and the creative and inauguratory acts of beginning are periodically repeated.

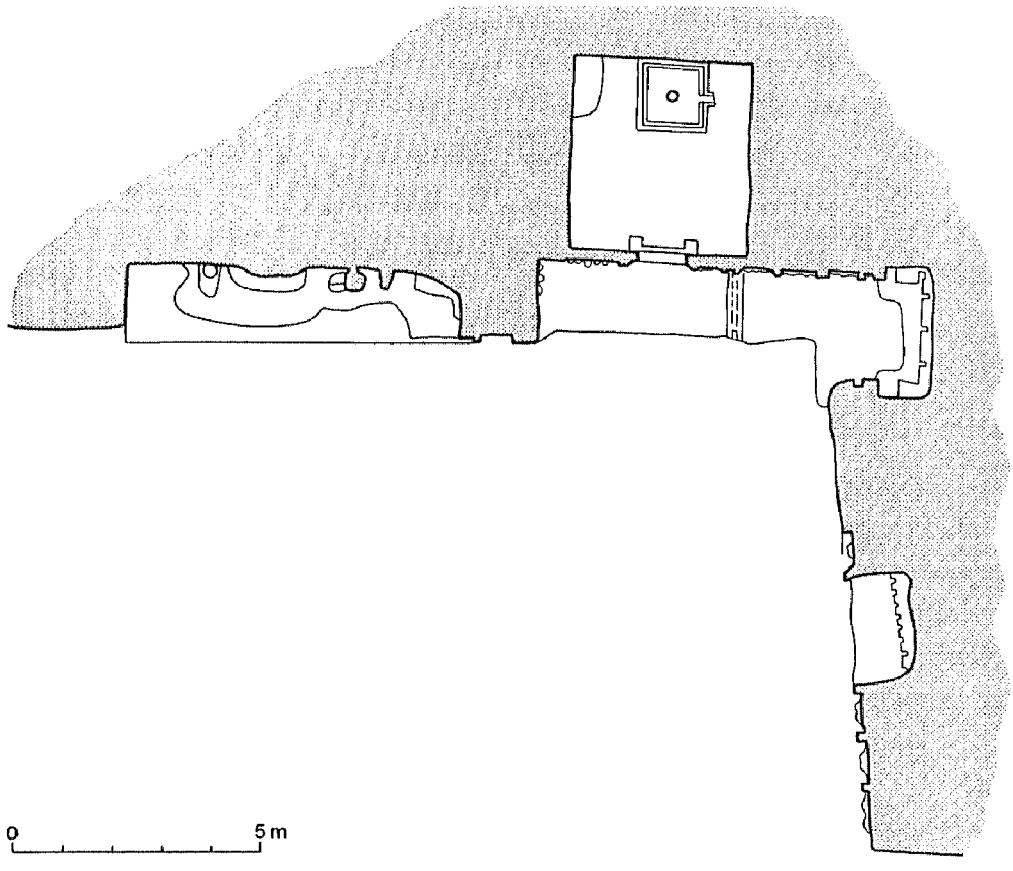
All this is directly relevant to Udayagiri. We have seen that references to the sun, moon, and year are built into the landscape of the site and that links between the celestial bodies and the king's person are repeatedly made by images and inscriptions. With this, we can begin to answer – finally and at last – the historical questions that we raised in the introduction to this book: Why did the Guptas come to Udayagiri and what compelled them to impose their iconographic programme on the place with such vigour and thoroughness? The answer lies in the nature of the site as an ancient centre of astronomical observation, a place where the movements of the sun and moon were observed and where the year was charted and the calendar made. The unction festival, the key moment of the *rājasūya*, was always preceded by a year of preliminaries in the textual accounts.[176] And the king's lustration took place on the first day of Caitra, the very day on which the new Gupta calendar was inaugurated.[177] Because Udayagiri was a place where the year was known, it became the pre-eminent place for scheduling, visualising, and memorialising the sacrifice. The mythological ties that were developed between the sun, Viṣṇu, and the sacrificial performance all heightened the potency of Udayagiri and drew ambitious kings inexorably toward it.

The sprinkling of the unction fluid marked a climax of the consecration process: at that very moment the king was reborn, the unction fluid bestowing, as it were, a new body on the sacrificer. The *rājasūya* was thus the means by which an ambitious chief was brought forth into kingship, an essential preliminary for any aspirant to paramount status. The political trajectory is clarified by the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, Amarasiṃha's famous word

encyclopaedia: a king who has all his neighbours submit to him and who dominates the whole world is a universal monarch (*cakravartin*). As a supreme ruler (*samrāj*) he controls his domain, has performed the *rājasūya*, and has other kings following his commands.[178] That this ideological path was mapped at Udayagiri is shown by the inscription in Cave 8 which states that Candragupta came to the place with his minister for the purpose of total world conquest (*kṛtsnapṛthivījayārtha*).[179] The word *cakravartin* in not used in the Udayagiri inscriptions any more than *rājasūya* or *yajña*, but the ideas are clearly visualised in the Varāha panel and the figures of Varuṇa. During the rituals that accompany the preparation of the *rājasūya* unction fluid, it is divided into four parts and put into four vessels, an act specifically described in Maitrāyaṇīya and Taittirīya texts.[180] This explains why Varāha and the kneeling king at Udayagiri are flanked by four figures of Varuṇa, not just one. When the moment comes to lustrate the king, the four vessels are held by officiants standing at the four cardinal points. These people were drawn from different social classes and hold vessels made of different kinds of wood. Accordingly, they represent the king's total conquest of the world – as the inscription says – not just a military occupation of the geographical directions but dominion over the social and natural orders as well. The idea of the *cakravartin* is further elaborated in Purāṇic texts and sundry inscriptions; these sources leave little doubt that kings were preoccupied with capping their achievements with sacrifice.[181] The conflation of Viṣṇu, sacrifice, and king is visually summarised in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, which states: "a discus (*cakra*), the sign of Viṣṇu, (is found) in the hands of all universal kings (*cakravartin*), whose power cannot be resisted, even by the gods."[182]

That these ritual and political aspirations can be situated at Udayagiri is reinforced by the cycle of the *varṣāmāsavrata*, a ritual discussed in Section 1.6. In this observance, Viṣṇu sleeps during the rainy season, his waking day being the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Kārttika. On this day, the rising sun illuminated the figure of Kārttikeya in Cave 7 – the shrine located just a few steps from the Varāha image and the Sanakānika inscription (Figure 26).[183] The reason for this arrangement is not difficult to understand: Kārttikeya derives his name from the month of Kārttika, and he is Skanda, the god of war. Accordingly, the month of Kārttika is the most auspicious time for military exploits. So Candragupta's statement that he came to Udayagiri for the purpose of "total world conquest" can be tied to both to Kārttikeya, the god of war, and the month of Kārttika, the time of war. Candragupta's campaign coincided, we would suggest, not only with the moment when Viṣṇu was roused from his sleep but with the month when a war of ceremonial validation could be appropriately conducted.

When we interpret the votive figure at the base of the Varāha panel as the consecrated Candragupta, a king bent on becoming a *cakravartin*, we can




26 Udayagiri. Plan of Caves 5 and 6 and adjacent shrines.

readily see that he is both sacrificer and devotee. As a sacrificer in the ancient mould, Candragupta was the *yajamāna* who would have received his due at the end of the performance. From the ritualist's point of view, once Candragupta had agreed to pay the sacrificial fee, he would be brought forth into kingship by the necessary rites. But Candragupta was also the devotee of a sacrifice that has been reconceived and renovated in theistic terms. The identification of Viṣṇu with the sacrifice no doubt reaches back to the days of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and other canonical works of the *Yajurveda*. But it is only in the Gupta age that the sacrifice is incorporated – literally and completely – into Viṣṇu's body.[184] This is made especially plain in Purāṇic descriptions of the Boar incarnation: Varāha's tusks are the stakes to which the victim is tethered, his teeth are the offerings, his mouth the altar, his mane all the hymns of the Vedas, his nostrils the oblations, his snout the ladle, his body the hall where the sacrificial rites are performed.[185] The whole matter is summarised with startling precision in the *Bhagavad Gītā* when the Lord declares; "I alone am the supreme sacrifice here in this body."[186] So Candragupta's engagement with the sacrificial project involved not only negotiations with a cadre of Vedic specialists as the *yajamāna*, but a direct encounter with a mighty and living god. Like Arjuna before Kṛṣṇa, Candragupta could be only a devotee. The religious fervour that informed the

relationship is superbly expressed in *Bhagavad Gītā* 11: 36–46. From this we extract what is perhaps the most-celebrated verse:

> tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas
> tvam asya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam |
> vettāsi vedyaṃ ca paraṃ ca dhāma
> tvayā tataṃ viśvam anantarūpa ||
>
> Original God and soul primordial –
> You are the ultimate support of this world!
> The knower, the known, the final abode –
> All is strung upon you of Infinite form!

The combination of *bhakta* and *yajamāna* in the person of the monarch is not explicitly stated in Gupta records nor indeed in Vaiṣṇava texts – it has to be recovered from a collective reading of the inscriptions, coins, and the Udayagiri sculptures. That this is a correct interpretation is shown by inscriptions that follow the style and ideological lead of Gupta records and in which the two roles are brought together in a simplified and condensed form. An illustrative case is the land-grant of Dahrasena found at Pārḍī in northern Gujarāt and dated 456–57. These copper-plates inform us that Dahrasena was both "a servant of the feet of the Bhagavat (i.e., Viṣṇu)" and "a performer of the horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedha*)."[187] The Gupta king, unlike Dahrasena, was not simply a servant of the lord's feet, he was the first among all devotees, the *paramabhāgavata*. And the Gupta was not only a performer of the horse-sacrifice, he was its anointed lord.[188]

The example of Dahrasena is important because it elucidates the nature of the Gupta hierarchy and confirms our reading of the Varāha panel as a multivalent signifier of kingship and authority. More exactly, the epigraphic and visual evidence shows that the Gupta imperial formation consisted of an emperor surrounded by a circle of subordinates – big kings and little kings should we use the terminology of Nicholas Dirks.[189] Subordinate rulers presumably intermarried with the Gupta house and controlled regional kingdoms of considerable importance, as did the Vākāṭakas. But the policy whereby subdued kings were restored to power, reported both in the *Raghuvaṃśa* and Samudragupta's inscriptions, was not simply an open-handed reinstatement of those humiliated in battle: if a king wished to regain his ancestral seat he had to submit – we may even say convert – to the political and religious dispensation of the Guptas.[190] The way in which subordinates were made to knuckle under and replicate the Gupta system is well illustrated by the fourth-century Valkhā plates from central India. The oldest of these represent *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa as both a subject of the Gupta emperor and a whole-hearted devotee of Viṣṇu. In the first case, Bhuluṇḍa "meditates on the feet" of the Paramabhaṭṭāraka "in the best interest of all living creatures." Presumably, this means that if Bhuluṇḍa

had not tendered submission, Samudragupta would have uprooted him and pursued a ruthless scorched-earth policy on his land. Bhuluṇḍa then declares himself to be a devotee of Viṣṇu and a slave of Lord Nārāyaṇa (*svāmināráyaṇadāsa*), that is, a supplicant in the official religion that enjoyed special prominence under Candragupta II. The relevant portion of the Valkhā charter is worth giving in full as this is in some sense the "missing text" that describes how the Sanakānikas would have understood and described their relationship to the Vaiṣṇava cult at Udayagiri:[191]

> svasti | valkhāḥ paramabhaṭṭārakapādānuddhyātena
> sarvvabhūtānugrahānukampinā mahārājabhuluṇḍena
> bhagavataḥ surāsuranaroragaguroḥ amaravararipu-
> rudhirasritaśaraprasarasyaikārṇṇavavipulavimala-
> paryaṅkatalaśāyinaḥ nābhisambhavāravinda-
> ṣaṭpadopagīyamānanidrasya śāṅkhabāṇaśakticakra-
> nandakajvalāṅgadāgraśūlabhāsvarāṣṭhabāhuśālinaḥ
> balinarakanamucivarāturagabhujagadaśavadana-
> kāṃsacānnūrāriṣṭaśiśupāladarppamathanasya
> jagadskannoddharaṇavarāhasyānādimadhyanidhana-
> sya suragaṇālaṅkariṣṇos trailokyaprabhaviṣṇor
> asuragaṇajiṣṇor viṣṇoḥ parameṇa
> bhaktisnehānurāgeṇa śirasā praṇipatya
> balicarusatropayojyagrāmāḥ pañca-
> bhogatvenātisṛṣṭās

> May it be auspicious! Meditating on the feet of the Paramabhaṭṭāraka in the sympathetic interest of all beings, *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa reverently bows his head to Viṣṇu with the greatest attachment, love and devotion – to Viṣṇu who illuminates the three worlds and is the victor over hoards of demons – to the preceptor of gods, demons, serpents and men – to the Lord whose flood of arrows spills the blood of the gods' most ardent foes, who rests upon the wide and spotless couch that is the cosmic sea, whose sleep is praised in song by the bees near the lotus born of his navel, who is endowed with eight resplendent arms carrying the conch, arrow, spear, discus, radiant mace, mighty javelin and Nandaka sword,[192] who breaks the pride of Bali, Naraka, Namuci, Varaturaga, Kālīya, Rāvaṇa, Kaṃsa, Cānūra, Ariṣṭa and Śiśupāla,[193] who as Varāha lifts up the fallen earth, who has no beginning, middle or end and who is the very ornament of the heavenly hosts – by that *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa five villages were

> granted for the performance of (the rites known as) *bali, caru,* and *sattra.*

Very obviously *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa is not saying he is a god. Similarly the title *paramabhāgavata* used by the Guptas is not a declaration of divinity, but instead an announcement of the king's unique status within the community of Vaiṣṇava believers. The king sought to establish a special relationship with the object of his love, to draw near to the godhead, to enjoy the divine presence and to be blessed, improved, and empowered by the Lord's grace. The transformative nature of devotion could lead to a total renovation of person and personality so that, to use Manu's words, the king was "constituted according to divine measure."[194] The devotion that achieved this aim involved much more than quietism. As we know very well from the *Bhagavad Gītā,* devotion required the full application of every faculty – a vigorous, dynamic, and unflinching commitment to god and his path. For the warrior and member of the ruling elite, this devotion could lead to battle and death; nothing could be held in reserve before an omnipotent deity who had appeared again and again in different forms to save the world and reinstate a just and proper social order. As an instrument in the establishment of this dispensation, the king sought to replicate – in his own way and in his own time – the god's heroic achievements in mytho-poetic time. But in doing so the king is not representing himself as god, as we have just said. He made every effort to draw near to the godhead, to "imitate" the lord in a religious and socio-political sense, but divine status came only after death. We may take the description given in *Bhagavad Gītā* 8: 5–10, which outlines the final destiny of the human soul, as authoritative in the Vaiṣṇava context of the Gupta age. These verses are worth giving in full – here I quote van Buitenen's compelling translation.[195]

> antakāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram |
> yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṃ yāti nāsty atra saṃśayaḥ || 5
> yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaran bhāvaṃ tyajaty ante kalevaram |
> taṃ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ || 6
> tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca |
> mayy arpitamanobuddhir mām evaiṣyasyasaṃśayaḥ || 7
> abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nānyagāminā |
> paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ yāti pārthānucintayan|| 8
> kaviṃ purāṇam anuśāsitāraṃ aṇor aṇīyāṃsam anusmared yaḥ |
> sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpaṃ ādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt || 9
> prayāṇakāle manasācalena bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva |
> bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak sa taṃ paraṃ puruṣam
> upaiti divyam || 10
>
> He who leaves this body and departs this life while thinking of me alone in his final hour, rejoins my

being – of that there is no doubt. A person always
becomes whatever being he thinks of when he at
last relinquishes the body, Kaunteya, for one is
given being from its being. Therefore think of me at
all times and fight: with mind and spirit fixed on me
you shall beyond a doubt come to me. While
thinking of the divine Supreme person with a mind
that is yoked to a discipline of practice and does not
stray away from him, he goes to him, Pārtha.
The Sage and Preceptor primordial,
More minute than an atom, creator of all,
Of form unimaginable, hued like the sun
At the back of the night – who thus thinks of him
In his final hour with unshaken mind,
Armed with his devotion and power of yoga,
With his breath ensconced between his eyebrows,
Attains to the Person Supreme and Divine.

This doctrine of the focused and worthy soul attaining the status of *puruṣa*, which the text describes as *acintyarūpaṃ*, is just what we find in the posthumous Allahābād inscription of Samudragupta – even the terms are the same: Samudragupta is "the cause of the destruction of evil and creation of good, an inconceivable cosmic being (*puruṣasyācintyasya*)."[196] Samudragupta is also praised in the inscription for his poetic skill – perhaps a reflection of the *Gītā*'s description of the highest being as *kavi*.[197] The spiritual transformations that were understood to accompany death show that the title *paramadaivata*, used by Kumāragupta I and Budhagupta, does not mean that these kings were claiming to be a "great divinity" as some scholars have wanted to suppose, but rather that each was a "supreme devotee of the divine."[198] Hans Bakker has perceptively and succinctly summarised the socio-religious situation in his writing about Rāmagiri, the holy mountain of the Vākāṭakas in the Deccan: "By the assimilation of popular cults like that of the boar and the man-lion, a dual aim was served, viz. to unite the subjects of the realm into a community of worship, and, secondly, to confirm the royal family's sacrosanct, leading role in this community. In this way the symbolic texture of Vākāṭaka kingship was given shape in the heyday of its rule."[199] The same words can be applied to the Guptas and to Udayagiri.

## 1.12. VIṢṆUPADA AND VARṢĀGAMA

Our analysis of Udayagiri in this chapter has invoked the sun, moon, and stars; it has envisaged their movements and the observations made in Gupta times; it has introduced the king and his agents as ritual actors. At this point and to

conclude, I would go one step further. Drawing together a number of strands that have been explored in the preceding pages, I should like to make some suggestions about the festival cycle at Udayagiri and the place of the Gupta kings in it. This is speculative ground, certainly, but worth entering because it has the potential to explain how a number of features at Udayagiri functioned in the early fifth century.

The *Viṣṇudharmāḥ* – a Bhāgavata text to which we have already referred – provides a ritual framework. In Chapter 18 of this book, there is a description of a lengthy observance in honour of the Viṣṇupada – the footprints of Lord Viṣṇu.[200] The *vrata* associates the right and left foot of the god with the sun's progress north and south – the summer and winter halves of the year respectively. The worship of Viṣṇu's feet is confined to the summer half-year and involves donations to brāhmaṇas, the offering of flowers, incense, and other substances and the constant repetition of Nārāyaṇa's name. The performance of this *vrata* during the *uttarāyaṇa* – the six months from Pauṣa to Āṣāḍha as the sun courses northward – helps explain the placement of the large temple on the northern hill at Udayagiri and, in our view, the dedication of that temple to Viṣṇu's feet.

Several pieces of evidence can be invoked in support of these proposals. The temple itself (Figure 3) is a complete ruin but surviving architectural fragments indicate that it dates to the early Gupta period.[201] The site was unearthed in a primitive fashion by D. R. Bhandarkar who never published the excavation because it did not yield the Buddhist *stūpa* that he insisted lay beneath the temple plinth.[202] The fragments found by Bhandarkar, now in the museum at Gwalior, show that the building was a Vaiṣṇava foundation. A large torso shows that a standing figure of Viṣṇu was installed in the temple: what I understand to be its head is in the Cleveland Museum of Art.[203] Although this may have been the temple's main anthropomorphic image, Viṣṇu's footprints appear to have been the central focus of worship. This may be adduced from an inscription in Cave 19, located beneath the temple at the base of the hill (Figure 3). The inscription tells us that the cave was made by Candragupta and subsequently restored by Kanha, a devotee who "bows forever to the feet of Viṣṇu."[204] The importance and antiquity of the Viṣṇupada cult in the neighbourhood is shown by the Heliodorus pillar that carries an inscription mentioning the "three steps to immortality" (*trini amutapādāni*), a clear reference to Viṣṇu's three strides.[205] Not far from the Heliodorus pillar is "Caraṇ tīrth," a pilgrimage spot and bathing place on the River Betwā that was connected with Viṣṇu's feet from at least the eleventh century (Figure 2).[206] Other places have a similar configuration. The most important is Rāmtek, the ancienct Rāmagiri, which served as the main Vaiṣṇava religious centre of the Vākāṭakas in the Deccan. Rāmtek took Udayagiri as its prototype and had a temple containing the Viṣṇupada.[207] Rāmgarh, a sacred hill about fifty kilometres north of Vidiśā, is an analogous site

(Figure 1). Probably developed by subordinate kings ruling from Vaṭodaka – the modern Badoh – Rāmgarh can be understood as a sub-imperial version of Udayagiri.[208] The sculptures at the site include four-armed Viṣṇu, Varāha, Narasiṃha, and Trivikrama, all cut into the living rock. Those of Varāha are miniature copies inspired by the monumental figure at Udayagiri. Those of Trivikrama do not replicate anything at Udayagiri, but the representation of Viṣṇu striding in a victorious fashion over the three worlds – repeated again and again to highlight its special importance and guarantee its efficacy – indicates that the theme of Viṣṇu's steps was important at Udayagiri and makes it likely that the temple on the northern hill contained the Viṣṇupada. Poetic authorisation for this is given by Kālidāsa in his famous *Meghadūta*. In verse 26, Vidiśā is mentioned along with a nearby hill nick-named "low" (*nīcairākhyaṃ girim*).[209] This may seem like a curious denigration of Udayagiri and its name, but the scholastic tradition explains that Vāmanagiri is meant.[210] So Kālidāsa was making a witty allusion to Vāmana the dwarf and thus to Trivikrama and the Viṣṇupada.

While each of the foregoing points may seem relatively unimportant, tenuous, or based on a contestable interpretation, collectively they are not without a certain historical force. Taken together they tend to support the proposal, first made in print by R. Balasubramaniam, that Udayagiri was the original location of the iron pillar at Mehrauli.[211] The iron-pillar inscription describes it as being "raised on the hill (called) Viṣṇupada."[212] If Balasubramaniam's proposed provenance is accepted, and I can see no cogent reason for rejecting the case out of hand, then the inscription provides the only toponym for Udayagiri in Gupta times. It also proves that Viṣṇu's footprints were enshrined in the temple on the northern hill. As a consequence – and this is the reason I have rehearsed the evidence – there is a factual basis for imagining the temple as an important centre of the six-month *vrata* in honour of the Viṣṇupada. During the course of the *vrata*, there are additional rites involving the king and the redemption of the earth by Varāha.[213] As already noted, these concerns are embedded in the iconography and landscape of Udayagiri.

During Phālguna – the month straddling February and March – the days get perceptibly longer. Then comes Caitra and the vernal equinox, that point in spring when the length of day and night are equal. This was an important time in the fifth century because it marked the beginning of the year in the calendrical reckoning of the Gupta kings. In the fields below Udayagiri, the winter crops mature and are brought to harvest. Summer then starts to press in: the days become warm, the wind becomes hot, and the soil dries out. Rivers are reduced to little streams and big tanks become shallow ponds. Eventually the forest becomes dry and still, the trees begin to drop their leaves, insect-life disappears, and animals move languidly. Through all these changes the Viṣṇupada *vrata* continues. By the month of Āṣāḍha – as the end of the

observance at last approaches – everything is parched. Day and night are permeated with scorching heat. People go to the passage at Udayagiri to watch the rising sun and count the days until the Monsoon breaks. When the sun enters the passage – when at last the sun is "caught" by the mountain – they know that the clouds will soon arrive and release their life-giving rain.

This helps explain Manu's cryptic assertion, cited at the head of this chapter: "From the sun comes rain, from rain comes food, wherefrom come living creatures." That food should come from rain and creatures from food is an old phenomenology found even in Upaniṣadic thought and obvious enough from the nature of things. But how the sun – which is dry and hot – should produce the rain – which is wet and cool – is a puzzling contradiction. Textual sources do not help us here: Suśruta, whose compendium reached its final state in the early Gupta period, observes that during the watery seasons (i.e., the rains, the winter, and the dews) the earth abounds in the qualities of Soma, and this causes the characteristics of sweetness, smoothness, and coolness to predominate. In commentary, Ḍalhaṇa adds that during autumn, spring, and summer the earth abounds in the quality of fire, so that pungency (*kaṭu*), dryness (*rūkṣa*), and heat (*uṣṇa*) predominate.[214] Udayagiri and the study of the sun as a diagnostic of the seasons provides a causative link between these polarities and thus an explanation that the texts do not: when the rising sun reaches the end of its northward journey, the rains will surely come. No surprise, then, that the sun is often called *kālakṛt* – the producer of time and so of the seasons.

Using the sun to chart the seasons and to predict the arrival of the rains was an old annual pattern at Udayagiri, something that the shell-inscriptions in the passage show was practiced long before the fifth century. When the Guptas arrived in central India, they brought with them a revitalised form of the Vaiṣṇava faith in which *avatāravāda*, the doctrine of incarnation, was a central tenet.[215] As we have seen, the Guptas reworked Udayagiri according to this theistic vision. Viṣṇu and his various incarnations were inserted into the landscape at crucial points, and a Vaiṣṇava cycle of ritual acts was introduced. In this cycle, Viṣṇu was "put to sleep" on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha, a day which anticipated both the summer solstice and the arrival of the Monsoon.

Of course things are not quite so mechanical in the natural world. While astronomers can tinker with their calendars until they coincide exactly with astronomical events and devotees can time their *vrata*-s accordingly, the arrival of the Monsoon is rather less predictable: it can be delayed, it can be weak, it can even fail. But the logic of the Indian ritualist is nothing if inexorable. Everything prescribed must be performed and performed correctly in due time. For the believer, a failure to put Viṣṇu to sleep on the proper day could have calamitous results. The rituals must be done, so they are done. There was only one problem: if the ritual was performed and nothing seemed to happen, the

religious ideology, and the political order which it endorsed, could look absurd. Legitimacy and stability could be undermined; the kingdom could topple. Given the unpredictable nature of the Monsoon, these were distinct possibilities. So what could guarantee a perceptible and dependable result?

It is my contention that the Guptas ensured a result at Udayagiri through the water-management system. This can be explained as follows. In the ordinary course of events, the mountain would have been very dry in the summer months of Jyeṣṭha and Āṣāḍha. The large tank above the passage – the tank that drew our attention at the beginning of this chapter – would have been empty at this time of year. The only way the tank could have held water would have been for it to have been raised mechanically from the River Bes. This would have been daunting but not impossible. In preparation for the festival in which Viṣṇu was "put to sleep" in Āṣāḍha, we can imagine the tank being filled by hundreds of Vaiṣṇava devotees as part of their *vrata*. On the eleventh day of the bright fortnight, the festival was duly performed and Viṣṇu was "put to sleep." By then the tank would have been ready. At the right moment, a leading priest would have uttered appropriate *mantra*-s and given a signal for a floodgate to be opened. A refreshing flow of water would have rushed through the passage and down the stepped cascade, filling the tank at the foot of the hill next to the Varāha image – an impressive spectacle indeed. The assembled gentry, farmers, and common-folk watching the theatrics would have come away convinced of the power of the rituals and those who controlled them.[216] The Monsoon clouds, perhaps looming already on the southern horizon, would have begun to bucket down rain in the days and weeks that followed. The pivotal nature of this time of year was poignantly captured by van Buitenen in one of his landmark papers on early Sāṃkhya:[217]

> For anyone who lives in India the coming of the rains is the turning point of the year. After the elemental force of summer, sapping the resources of man and nature, transforming the plains into bleak wasteland, the onset of the monsoon is the dawn of life and creation. In the nothingness of the sky white clouds appear, in the dry beds of almost forgotten rivers torrents come down with a vital force that is at once frightening and reassuring. Whatever the more remote associations of the primordial waters one hears about – the embryonic water in which the child is born, or the surface of unconsciousness from which consciousness emerges – in India at least the waters of creation should represent principally the rains and swelling rivers. The negation of existence before the rains come, real starvation, gives way to a new vitality in man and nature; fodder is plentiful, the plains are green, the crop is harvested. Life starts anew.

By the end of the rainy season in Gupta times, the lower tank at Udayagiri would have been full to the brim and the base of the Varāha image immersed in

water. Upright and active, the rescued earth riding victoriously on his tusk, the Varāha would have signalled that Viṣṇu's period of sleep had ended and that a new season and a new age had begun. The reworking of Udayagiri in the early fifth century deliberately represented Viṣṇu as the cosmic author of this cycle and all its benefits. The reworking also advertised the intimacy of the Gupta kings with Viṣṇu, indicating they stood close to the supreme power that guided the world, provided the rains and sustained the essence of life itself.

TWO

# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GODS

hariṇā jitaṃ jayati jeṣyaty eṣā guṇastutir na hi sā |
nanu bhagavān eva jayo jetavyaḥ cādhijetā ca ||

Hari was victorious, He is victorious and will be victorious:
Surely this is not suitable praise of His qualities!
For verily the Lord alone is the conquest, the conquered
and the conqueror.

Poḍāgarh Pillar Inscription[1]

The colossal image of Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation is the iconographic centrepiece of Udayagiri, the culmination of an elaborate visual and epigraphic programme that moves from the depths of cosmic time to the resplendent glory of the present age. Within this framework, the kneeling votive figure beneath Varāha represents the Gupta king as a universal ruler engaged with god and sacrifice as *paramabhāgavata* and *yajamāna*. All this has been explored in Chapter 1. Additionally we have noted that the lower tank at Udayagiri once touched Varāha's feet: in the rainy season the image would have actually risen out of the water, just as the incarnation is visualised in Chapter 248 of the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[2] Although V. S. Agrawala studied this chapter in depth and explained much of the difficult terminology, the closing verse did not draw his attention.

athoddhṛtya kṣitiṃ devo jagataḥ sthāpanecchayā |
pṛthivīpravibhāgāya manaścakre 'mbujekṣaṇaḥ || 78

So having elevated the earth, the lotus-eyed Lord,
with a desire to establish the world,
Set his mind on the division of Pṛthivī.

This verse is enigmatic and seems to have no place in the religious mythology of Varāha. Having troubled himself to rescue the earth, it seems curious that Varāha should suddenly contemplate dividing her into parts. Was not the integrity of the earth something that Viṣṇu sought to preserve in this and previous incarnations?

Why Viṣṇu should seek to divide the earth turns on the act of division – *pravibhāga* – a word that hints at the dismemberment of the sacrificial victim into appropriate portions or shares.[3] While this apportionment fits with Varāha as the embodiment of sacrifice, we are still left with a need to explain why Viṣṇu should want to dismember the earth in the first place. That the earth will indeed be divided may be taken as certain: the action has been conceived by a mighty god who gives no sign of being deflected in his intentions. We may even say that the division enjoys a divine mandate and absolute guarantee. Yet for all that the text stops short – it anticipates, but it does not describe. This is because the Purāṇic narrative is concerned primarily with the supramundane and supernatural, the heavenly world where the Varāha incarnation had its origin. The workaday actions that ensue, those of establishment and division, do not take place in this realm. Rather, they take place in the mundane and natural – in the "here and now" – the *iha* of the inscriptions at Udayagiri and elsewhere.[4] To put the matter another way, while Viṣṇu has set his mind on the earth's establishment and division, others are expected to effect the particulars. This is clarified in the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, where the earth goddess, having been rescued by Varāha, expresses concern about how she will be maintained after the incarnation has withdrawn. The reply is straightforward:[5]

> varṇāśramācāraratāḥ santaḥ śāstraikatatparāḥ |
> tvāṃ dhare dhārayiṣyanti teṣāṃ tvadbhārāhitāḥ || 47
>
> Those who practice the duties ordained for each caste and for each other, and who act strictly in accord with holy law, will sustain thee, O Earth; to them is your care committed.

These lines show that the establishment and division of the earth were sociopolitical acts performed by the king and his subordinates as a matter of religious duty, specifically by the king as *paramabhāgavata* and leader of the Vaiṣṇava faithful – the roles explained fully in Section 1.11. Historically speaking, the division of the earth is something we know very well from the copper-plate charters of the Gupta period. These record how the earth was carved into landed estates that put brāhmaṇas and temples on a secure economic footing. This world, learned and imbued with *dharma*, is that which Viṣṇu sought to establish through his Varāha *avatāra*, the incarnation that presides over the present age according to *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1: 4: 3–11. The creation of a world populated by brāhmaṇas and temples, appropriately established and suitably endowed, stood at the very heart of the dispensation advanced by the Gupta

kings. In the pages that follow, my aim is to describe the legal, religious, and political workings of this dispensation and to elucidate the role that Udayagiri played, as an imperial centre, in its constitution.

## 2.1. TĀMRAŚĀSANA

While the Varāha image at Udayagiri and texts like the *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Viṣṇusmṛti* make broad theological assertions about the earth and the king, how these generalities found their way into everyday practice is a separate problem. The particulars can be reconstructed from the copper-plate charters that began to be issued in significant numbers from the mid-fourth century. Engraved on sheets of hammered copper, the inscriptions sometimes describe themselves as *tāmrapaṭṭa*, "a plate of copper" or *tāmraśāsana* "an order on copper." In Gupta times, oblong sheets of copper were generally used, but square examples are also found. If the text of the charter was long, it could extend over several leaves that were bound together with a ring and seal. Imperial seals carry the king's name and lineage, along with the royal emblem (Figure 19). The Maitrakas, a subordinate house, simply give the name Śrī Bhaṭārka, the founder of the dynasty.[6]

The oldest surviving copper-plates that use Sanskrit and contain the apparatus of land conveyance belong to the Pallava, Śālaṅkāyana, Vākāṭaka, and Valkhā dynasties.[7] An inked rubbing of a Śālaṅkāyana example, made by Walter Elliot in the nineteenth century and now in the British Museum, is illustrated here in Figure 27.[8] The near-simultaneous appearance of copper-plates of this type in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, the Deccan, and Mālwa shows that the practice of issuing plates did not have its origin in the south, as supposed by earlier scholars on incomplete evidence.[9] Rather, the phenomena emerged concurrently over a large area in the middle part of the fourth century, the very time when the Guptas were establishing themselves as the dominant power under Candragupta I (circa CE 319–50) and Samudragupta (circa CE 350–76). No grants have survived from these kings but two plates that were based on documents from the time of Samudragupta make it likely that copper-plates were issued under Samudragupta's jurisdiction.[10] Given the emphasis on the king's absolute title to the earth in the *Arthaśāstra*, a work compiled in the early Gupta period – as noted in Chapter 1 – and given too the celebration of Vaiṣṇava control of the earth at Udayagiri – an imperial Gupta site – it appears that the system of granting land, and of making a permanent record of these transactions on copper, was a development that the Guptas sought to foster and extend in significant ways. The conventions used in the charters were first explored by Stein and Sircar, with Salomon more recently providing an updated summary, rendering an account of stylistic developments unnecessary.[11] Here we only need note that the direct promotion of copper-plates from the mid-fourth

27 Ink impression of the copper-plates of the Śālaṅkāyana ruler Vijayanandivarman (fourth century). *Walter Elliot Collection, British Museum (1969, 4–1, 0.8).*

century under Gupta influence may be deduced from grants issued by the Valkhās. As already noted, these kings were politically and culturally subordinate to the Guptas.[12] Because the Valkhā grants lack some of the formal elements of fifth-century charters, or have them only in abbreviated form, they can be judged formative and thus reasonably close to the naissance of the practice.

The issuing of charters from early Gupta times shows that land was deemed to have economic value and that transactions involving land were sufficiently important to be recorded in a permanent fashion. Land, however, was not defined in a utilitarian manner (i.e., as a commodity in the modern sense). Inscriptions and texts rather present a shifting series of typologies that varied according to circumstance, purpose, and need. Suśruta's medical treatise, for example, divides the Indian landscape into two basic types: *jāṅgala* and *ānūpa*. The first zone is arid and healthy; the second, marshy and unhealthy.[13] Many gradations are possible, but the best environment is one in which these extremes are balanced (*sādhāraṇa*). This biogeography was developed in a framework of therapeutics: Suśruta understood food and the environment, both covered by the Sanskrit term *cara*, as integral to each other and fundamental to a healthy constitution.

Those who composed the copper-plate charters did not share these concerns. Although well-versed in Sanskrit and near contemporaries of Suśruta, the authors of the early charters classified land as cultivated (*vāpakṣetra*) or fallow (*khila*) rather than arid (*jāṅgala*) or marshy (*ānūpa*). And in the epigraphic forum, the only middle ground was "partially productive" (*ardhakhila*) and "producing little revenue" (*apratikara*).[14] These were not the happy medium of Āyurveda but unsatisfactory states that called for intervention and remedy (i.e., settlement and development). But this is to anticipate the land-granting system and its purpose. Before turning to these issues, some of the operative premises of the system need our attention.

An especially notable feature – at least for the issues explored in this chapter – is that when land was acquired by brāhmaṇas or temple-gods it was deemed to be a gift, even if the land was, in fact, a purchase.[15] This seemingly curious situation emerged because Gautama and other legal authorities of enormous prestige had uttered opinions about property and the lawful means by which it might be acquired. Gift, inheritance, purchase, lending on interest, conquest, and employment in labour were all acknowledged as lawful. These means were not open to all, however: everyone in society was required to follow the course appropriate to their station. Manu inveighs especially against brāhmaṇas who sought to earn a living by any means other than studying and teaching the Veda, performing sacrifices, and accepting gifts from virtuous people. And he instructs those who have acquired property otherwise to abandon it.[16]

> adhyāpanam adhyayanaṃ yajanaṃ yājanaṃ tathā |
> dānaṃ pratigrahaś caiva ṣaṭkarmāṇy agrajanmanaḥ || 10: 75
> ṣaṇṇāṃ tu karmaṇām asya trīṇi karmāṇi jīvikā |
> yājanādhyāpane caiva viśuddhāc ca pratigrahaḥ || 10: 76
> yad garhitenārjayanti karmaṇā brāhmaṇā dhanam |
> tasyotsargeṇa śudhyanti japyena tapasaiva ca || 11: 194

> Teaching and studying (the Veda), performing sacrifices for himself and sacrificing for others, making gifts and receiving them are the six acts for brāhmaṇas.
> But of these six acts, three are his means of earning a livelihood: sacrificing for others, teaching and accepting gifts from pure men.
> If brāhmaṇas acquire property by reprehensible means, they become pure by renouncing it, muttering prayers and by (performing) austerities.

These were matters of grave importance. If a brāhmaṇa acquired property by unsound means – for example receiving stolen goods as a gift – then the jurisdiction of that brāhmaṇa over the property would be problematic.[17] Religious activity based on things improperly garnered would be contaminated and ineffectual, however worthy the act or intent of the religious actors may have been. The same rules applied to the property of temple-gods because they were treated as real entities by their votaries, a legal point we hope to demonstrate in the pages that follow. Now because brāhmaṇas and temple-gods were the primary recipients of land in the Gupta period, transactions in their favour were naturally handled with great meticulousness. Exchanges typically involved prospective donors placing detailed petitions before the court. The petitions were checked by officials against existing records and the relevant parcels of land described and delineated. In due course, the transaction was sanctioned. Only then was a copper-plate issued to the applicant. The wide acceptance of these protocols across much of India shows not only that there was a well-developed sense of law and property by the fourth century CE, but that there were real concerns about the validity and social viability of property transactions. These anxieties are highlighted by repeated appeals to a religious authority that, as we shall now see, attempted to guarantee the property rights of donees in perpetuity.

## 2.2. MAHĀBHĀRATA AND VYĀSA

The king's decision to grant land, or sanction such grants through his subordinates and functionaries, was invariably reenforced by the citation of authoritative verses of scripture. Vyāsa is normally said to be the author of these verses and in some cases the *Mahābhārata* is named as the textual source. These passages present a straightforward idea of cause and effect: donors gain merit through grants of land, and they will, as a consequence, enjoy heaven after death. The reverse is also true: those who overturn land-grants or assent to such actions will end up in hell. An important corollary is the notion that the merit of a grant is passed from king to king; that is, the current ruler, whoever he may be, enjoys the benefit of grants made in the past. He thus has no reason to

disturb earlier grants or confiscate land already given. Copper-plate charters show that these ideas were remarkably widespread by the fifth century. In the Vākāṭaka grants of Pravarasena II (*circa* CE 419?–55) the following lines were used repeatedly:[18]

> vyāsagītau cātra ślokau pramāṇīkartavyau |
> ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svargge modati bhūmidaḥ |
> ācchetā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vaset ||
> svadattām paradattāṃ vā hareta yo vasundharāṃ |
> gavāṃ śatasahasrasya hantur harati duṣkṛtam ||
>
> And on this point two verses sung by Vyāsa should be taken as authoritative:
> The giver of land rejoices in heaven for sixty thousand years (but) he who confiscates (granted land) and he who assents (to such action) shall reside in hell for that period!
> Whosoever confiscates land that has been given, whether by himself or by another, he incurs the guilt of the slayer of a hundred thousand cows!

The imprecation at the end of this passage appears in the copper-plates of Prabhāvatīguptā, indicating that they were part of a text that was current in the Deccan from at least the early fifth century.[19] A closely related text was circulating in southern Rājasthān at the same time. This is shown by the copper-plates of Dahrasena, dated CE 456–57 where the wording runs as follows:[20]

> ity uktañ ca bhagavatā vyāsena [|*]
> śaśtivarṣasahasrāṇi[21] svargge vasati bhūmidaḥ ||*]
> ācchettā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vased iti [||*]
>
> So it was said by lord Vyāsa:
> The giver of land resides in heaven for sixty thousand years; the confiscator (of granted land) and he who assents (to such action) shall reside in hell for that period!

Turning northward to the Gupta realm, these themes appear for the first time in the second quarter of the fifth century. As an example we take the Dāmodarpur copper-plates of Kumāragupta. These are dated CE 446–47 and are inscribed with the following verses:[22]

> api ca bhūmidānasamvaddhāṃ imau[23] ślokau bhavataḥ [*|]
> pūrvvadattāṃ dvijāti[bhyo] yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira [|*]
> mahīṃ mahīvatāṃ[24] śreṣṭha dānāc chreyo [']nupā[la*]naṃ [||*]
> bahubhir vvasudhā dattā dī[ya]te ca punaḥ punaḥ |
> yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā phalam iti [||*]
>
> And there are two verses connected with land-grants:
> O Yudhiṣṭhira, best of land-owners, carefully protect the

> land granted to brāhmaṇas by former (kings), for protection is better than the gift itself! By many has land been granted and it will be granted again and again. Whosoever possesses the earth, to him belongs the reward (of such a grant).

A slightly different version is found in the Dāmodarpur copper-plate of Budhagupta where the additional threat of an unpleasant reincarnation is added:[25]

> uktañ ca maharśśibhiḥ[26] ||*]
> svadattāṃ paradattāṃ vā yo haret vasundharāṃ ||*]
> [śvaviṣṭhā*]yāṃ kṛmir bhūtvā pitṛbhis saha pacyate |||*]
> [bahubhir vvasu*]dhā dattā rājabhis sagarādibhiḥ ||*]
> yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā phalam |||*]
> ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svargge modati bhūmidaḥ ||*]
> ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vaset |||*]
>
> And it has been said by the great sages:
> He who takes away land given by himself or by others, rots with his forefathers becoming a worm in excreta! Land has been granted by many kings, Sagara and others; whosoever possesses the earth, to him belongs the reward (of such a grant). The giver of land rejoices in heaven for sixty thousand years (but) he who confiscates (granted land) and he who assents (to such action) shall reside in hell for that period!

These verses enjoyed wide currency and were used by subordinates of the Guptas and Vākāṭakas, most notably the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas of central India. The grants of these kings repeatedly cite the verses and sometimes attribute them to the *Mahābhārata*.[27] Now in the manuscript traditions of the epic, the verses under consideration occur in the southern recension of the *Āśvamedhika Parvan*; in the critical edition the material under discussion is relegated to an appendix.[28] Although this portion of the *Parvan* is preserved only in relatively recent Malayālam manuscripts, it was cited in the fourteenth century by Sāyaṇa in his *Parāśaramādhavīya* and in the fifteenth by Vādirāja in his *Lakṣaṇālaṃkāra*. Karmarkar opined that the appendix was a *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* interpolation, something that would have appealed primarily to followers of the Bhāgavata *dharma*.[29] Given that copper-plate inscriptions testify that portions of this text were known in many parts of India in the fourth century – and first identified as belonging to the *Mahābhārata* in the fifth – it seems probable that the appendix was once integral to a Vaiṣṇava version of the *Āśvamedika Parvan*, which wandering bards circulated in the Vaiṣṇava courts of the early Gupta age.[30] This supposition gains some credence

from Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, a seventh-century romance that recounts how Queen Vilāsavatī heard the *Mahābhārata* recited at a temple festival in Ujjain.[31]

The last of the Uccakalpa plates, dated CE 533–34, again cites epic passages and further comments that the verses are from the *Mahābhārata*, "the collection of a hundred thousand verses" (*śatasāhasrī saṃhitā*).[32] The epic portions of this copper-plate are offered here in full; verses that are testified in earlier plates are printed in bold characters. This highlights that the author of this particular inscription – the *sāṃdhivigrahikanātha* who is recorded to have written it – drew epic quotations from a bundle of verses that were widely known in the fifth and sixth centuries.[33] That the imprecations are quoted in extenso seems to reflect a certain nervousness about the grant's viability in the longer term. Such concerns were not unwarranted: by the third decade of the sixth century, the Hūṇas had overrun north India, and this grant was, in fact, the last record of a dying regime.

uktañ ca mahābhārate śatasāhasry[ā*]ṃ saṃhitāyāṃ
paramarṣiṇā parāśarasutena vedavyāsena vyāsena [|*]
**pūrvvadattāṃ dvijātibhyo yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira mahī[ṃ*] [|*]**
**mahivatā[34] śreṣṭha dānāc chreyo [']nupālanam [||*]**
prāyeṇa hi narendrāṇāṃ vidyate n[ā*]śubhā gatiḥ [|*]
pūyatte[35] te tta[36] satataṃ prayacchanto vasu[ndharām*][||*]
**[bahubhir vvasu*]dhā bhuktā rājabhis sagarādibhi[ḥ] [|*]**
**yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā phalam[||*]**
**ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svargge modati bhūmidaḥ**
**ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vaset [||*]**
**svadattāṃ paradattāṃ vā yo hareta vasundharā[ṃ*][|*]**
**śvaviṣṭhāyāṃ kṛmir bhūtvā pitṛbhis saha majjati [||*]**
apānīyeṣv araṇyeṣu śuṣkakoṭa[ra*]vāsinaḥ [|*]
kṛṣṇāhayo hi jāyaṃte pūrvvadāyaṃ haranti ye [||*]

And it has been said in the *Mahābhārata*, the *śatasāhasrī saṃhitā*, by Vyāsa, the arranger of the Vedas, the supreme sage and son of Parāśara: O Yudhiṣṭhira, best of land-owners, carefully protect the land granted to brāhmaṇas by former (kings), for protection is better than the gift itself! As a rule, indeed, no inauspicious condition is experienced by kings, but they are purified forever when they bestow land. The earth has been enjoyed by many kings, Sagara and others; whosoever possesses the earth, to him belongs the reward (of such a grant). The giver of land rejoices in heaven for sixty thousand years (but) he who confiscates (granted land) and he who assents (to such action) shall reside in hell for that period! He who confiscates land that has been given, whether by himself or by another, he becomes a worm in the ordure of a dog, and sinks (into

> hell) together with his ancestors! Those who confiscate a
> previous grant are (re)born as black serpents, inhabiting
> the dried-up hallows of trees, in desert places destitute of water.

The dire consequences threatened by these lines effectively endorsed the rights of donees, namely the brāhmaṇas who were either learned in the Vedas or in charge of temple worship. We will return to these issues in Section 2.12. What is of immediate concern is how temples were established and how the priests who controlled these institutions built up endowments so they could continue their religious functions. I would like to illustrate this process using the history of three deities mentioned in the epigraphic corpus. These three gods may not have been very important in the Gupta period – indeed we can be reasonably certain they were rather minor. They are, however, unique in having records that chart their origin and something of their history as religious institutions.

## 2.3. PIṢṬAPURIKĀ DEVĪ

The first deity that gives some idea about the establishment of temples and the development of associated networks of patronage is the goddess Piṣṭapurikā Devī. We begin with the basic facts of her case. Piṣṭapurikā is first mentioned in a copper-charter of *mahārāja* Saṃkṣobha dated Gupta year 209 (CE 528–29).[37] This recounts how the king, having been petitioned by an individual named Choḍugomin, granted half a village "for the purpose of renewing whatever may become torn or broken and for the purpose of observing *bali, caru, sattra* at the temple of the divine goddess Piṣṭapurī which he had built."[38] Choḍugomin was evidently successful in garnering further patronage because a second plate tells us that *mahārāja* Śarvanātha, one of the Uccakalpa rulers, gifted him half a village.[39] In this inscription, Śarvanātha and Choḍugomika are recorded as having agreed that the property was being gifted so Choḍugomika and his descendents could carry out the necessary repairs and maintain the *bali, caru,* and *sattra* of Piṣṭapurikā Devī.[40] Not long after this Choḍugomika disappeared from the scene. What became of him and his descendants we shall probably never know. What is certain is that *mahārāja* Śarvanātha soon issued another charter, this time in favour of an individual named Kumārasvāmin. That was in Gupta year 214 (CE 533–34). As with the earlier grants, village lands were given "for the purpose of worship of the divine Piṣṭapurikā Devī at the temple which he had built at Mānapura, and for the purpose of repairing whatever may become broken or torn."[41]

The amount of information given by these three records is unique by Gupta standards. The value of the documentation is enhanced by additional copper-plates from the same region. These plates are not concerned with Piṣṭapurikā Devī per se, but they nonetheless clarify the processes by which

temples were endowed and controlled in the Gupta dominion. A number of questions can be posed regarding this material. The first centres on the identity of Piṣṭapurikā Devī. Following the model developed by Hermann Kulke, we could understand her as an autochthonous deity adopted by the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas as a means of bolstering their legitimacy in the forest territory assigned to them by the Gupta kings.[42] Several pieces of evidence support this approach. The most important is the actual name of the goddess. The town Piṣṭapura, after which she was surely named, is first mentioned in the Allahābād pillar inscription.[43] The place was one of several centres in the south conquered by Samudragupta, its importance in Gupta times confirmed by a series of copper-plates issued there in the fifth and sixth centuries.[44] The site corresponds to modern Pīṭhapuram in Andhra Pradesh (Figure 1). As commented by Fleet with characteristic sagacity, "the Piṣṭapurī of this [Parivrājaka] inscription must be a local form of some more famous and original goddess in Piṣṭapura itself."[45] Her shrine disappeared centuries ago, but her presence in Pīṭhapuram was recalled by the celebrated Telegu poet Śrīnātha (fl. 1400–40) in his *Bhīmeśvara Purāṇamu*.[46]

How Piṣṭapurikā Devī may have found her way northward from coastal Andhra to the Vindhyas can be understood from later examples, notably the movement of the goddess Śrī Śilā Devī from Bengal to Rājasthān in the sixteenth century.[47] Rāja Mān Singh I of Amber served as the Mughal governor of eastern India and, after defeating a local king, took his daughter in marriage. When this princess came to Rājasthān, she brought Śilā Devī with her, installing the goddess as a protective deity beside the entrance to the palace at Amber. A key role in the worship of Śilā Devī, then as now, was played by Bengali brāhmaṇas. This case is not unique. Among the examples that could be cited, I would draw attention to the celebrated image of Rāma Candra at Orccha. This was brought from Ayodhyā by Rānī Gaṇeś Kūṃvar, the wife of Madhukar Shāh (CE 1554–92). She saw the image in a prophetic dream and recovered it from the Sarayu River. An important religious actor in these events may have been the devotional poet Keśavdās who hailed from Orccha itself.[48]

These examples allow an analogous biography to be suggested for Piṣṭapurikā Devī: she appears to have been a southern deity who was carried northward from Piṣṭapura by the Parivrājakas. The connection to Andhra, should we care to speculate, was perhaps due to a forbear of the Parivrājaka house accompanying Samudragupta on his southern campaign, intermarrying with the local nobility after their defeat. However that may have been, when it came to moving the actual image, the Parivrājakas would not have done the work personally but co-opted ritual specialists for the purpose. The specialist in this case was evidently Choḍugomika, the priest who not only built a shrine for Piṣṭapurikā Devī but assembled endowments to maintain her worship. That Choḍugomika was a southerner is shown by the first part of his name. This is

not Sanskrit but rather a variant of Dravidian *coḍa*, a name used in later times by the Eastern Cāḷukyas and their subordinates, including those who controlled Pīṭhapuram itself.[49] The ending *-gomika* seems to indicate that our priest was a descendant or follower of the Choḍa. The diminutive endings also point southward: in the Allahābād inscription, all the kings of *dakṣiṇapatha* are similarly treated.[50]

Despite her unusual name, Piṣṭapurikā Devī appears to have been a form of the goddess Lakṣmī. This is shown by the Parivrājaka charter dated Gupta year 209. This documents a grant in favour of the goddess, but nonetheless opens with the invocation: *oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*.[51] This suggests that Piṣṭapurikā Devī was understood as Viṣṇu's consort. The charter also records that half of the village was given to Piṣṭapurikā, the implication being that the other half went to Viṣṇu. Other endowments support this interpretation. As noted at the beginning of this section, *mahārāja* Śarvanātha granted half a village to Choḍugomika so he could maintain offerings to Piṣṭapurikā Devī. Now the same village – it was called Dhavaṣaṇḍikā – had already been dedicated by *mahārāja* Jayanātha to the worship of Viṣṇu.[52] So there can be little doubt that the grants were complementary: one half of the village supporting the worship of Viṣṇu; the other half, Lakṣmī. We may suppose that a pair of shrines were constructed side by side, the first for Viṣṇu and the second for Piṣṭapurikā Devī when she arrived from the south. The images have not survived, but the practice of making divine couples in central India during the Gupta period is documented by two fifth-century sculptures from Vidiśā showing Viṣṇu and his consort (Figures 28 and 29).

The last grant to Piṣṭapurikā Devī tells us that two villages were given, this time to an individual named Kumārasvāmin. This became a popular name among Tamil brāhmaṇas in later times, so it is possible that Kumārasvāmin may have also come from the south. What is certain is that Kumārasvāmin built a new shrine for Piṣṭapurikā Devī. The building is specifically said to be at Mānapura – to distinguish it from the earlier shrine of Choḍugomika. The new grant was also more generous: two villages as opposed to the half villages allotted to Choḍugomika.

How are we to understand this information about Mānapura? Earlier in this discussion I appealed to the history of Śrī Śilā Devī at Amber to propose a likely biography of Piṣṭapurikā. Following another Rājput example, I would suggest that the history of Mandor provides equally helpful information. In the late fifteenth century when the capital was shifted to Jodhpur, the Rājput rulers brought their tutelary deity Cāmuṇḍā to the new fortress. The new temple was sited prominently on the southern ramparts of Mehrangarh but was rebuilt in the nineteenth century after the fortifications collapsed, taking the original building with it.[53] Back in Mandor, the empty chamber where Cāmuṇḍā was enshrined is still known and venerated six centuries on. Piṣṭapurikā Devī seems

28 Vidiśā. Torso of Viṣṇu, fifth century, as photographed in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the British Library.*

29 Vidiśā. Torso of Lakṣmī, fifth century, as photographed in the early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the British Library.*

to have been moved and rehoused in a similar manner. Her relocation inspired a fresh round of endowments, and the new location prompted the specific naming of Mānapura in the copper-plates. Fleet suggested that this Mānapura might be represented by the modern Mānpur near the River Son, about forty-seven miles in a southeasterly direction from Uncharā and thirty-two miles southeast of Kārītalāī (Figure 1).[54] Investigations have not revealed the location of Piṣṭapurikā's shrine, but the indefatigable explorer A. K. Singh has found a tenth-century temple at Mānpur named Jvālamukhī that may perpetuate her memory.[55]

## 2.4. ŚVETAVARĀHASVĀMIN

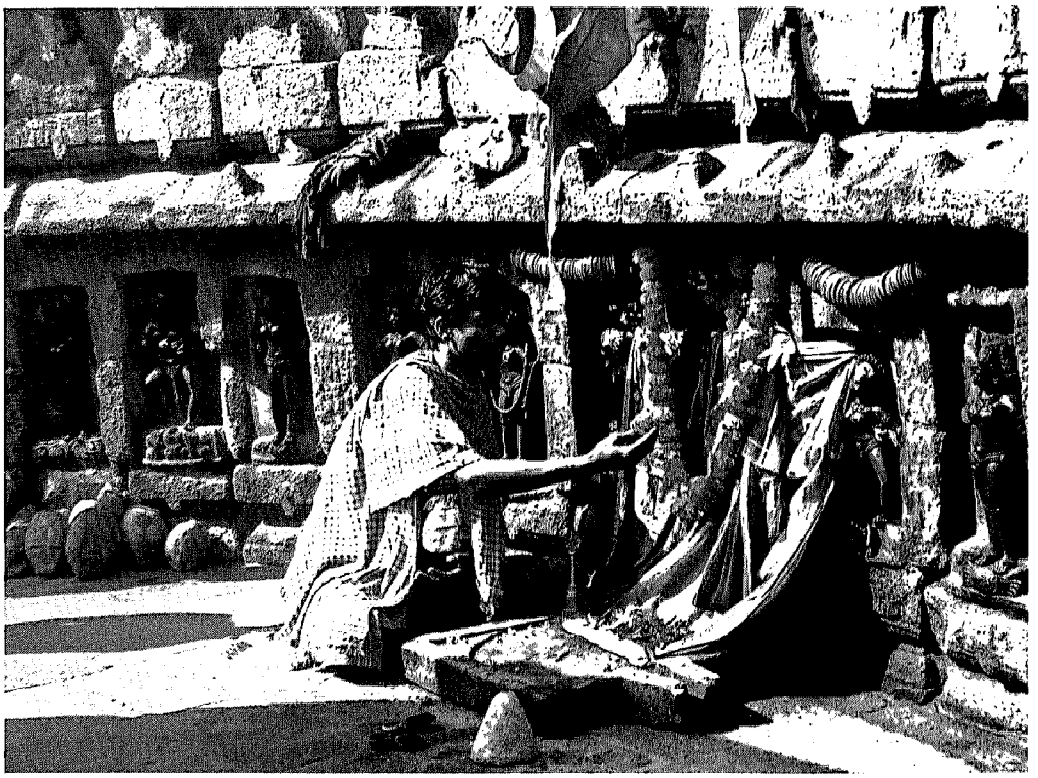
The second deity for whom we can construct an institutional history is Śvetavarāhasvāmin. Information about this god is provided by two copper-plate charters found at Dāmodarpur in 1915 (Figure 1).[56] The oldest of the charters, belonging to the reign of Budhagupta (circa CE 477–85), documents how a man named Ribhupāla, a *nagaraśreṣṭhin*, donated some land to Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin.[57] These gods are both forms of Viṣṇu. The first seems to have been named after the place where the River Kokā emerges from the Himālayas; the second is Varāha in his "white aspect," a widespread if somewhat rare iconographic form.[58] Having given parcels of land to these gods, Ribhupāla sought to purchase more land so he could build a pair of shrines (*devakula*). Although the description of these shrines in the records presents some intriguing difficulties, it is clear that Ribhupāla's application was reviewed by government record-keepers and then duly sanctioned.[59] A shrine was then constructed on the land. How this building was endowed is documented by the second charter.[60] This recounts how Amṛtadeva, the temple priest, petitioned the local court:[61]

> iha viṣaye samudayabāhyāprahatakhilakṣettrāṇām
> tridīnārikakulyavāpavikrayo [*]nuvṛttaḥ | tad arhatha
> matto dīnārān upasaṃgṛhya manmātuḥ puṇyābhivṛddhaye
> atrāraṇye bhagavataḥ śvetavarāhasvāmino devakule
> khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃskārakaraṇāya
> balicarusat[t*]rapravarttanagavyadhūpapuṣpaprāpaṇa-
> madhuparkkadīpādyupayogāya ca apradādharmmeṇa
> tāmrapaṭṭīkṛtya kṣetrasokān dātum iti
>
> Here in (this) district, the sale of unfurrowed land – fallow and bereft of revenue – is maintained at a rate of three *dīnāra*-s for one *kulyavāpa*. Therefore, please accept money from me and record [the transaction] on a copper-plate charter in accord with the law governing land not

> yielding anything for [the following reasons, i.e. ] the augmentation of the spiritual merit of my mother, for the repair of what may be broken and torn, for the performance of *bali, caru* and *sattra*, for the supply of cow's milk, incense and flowers and for the use of *madhuparka*, light and so forth in the temple of the god Śvetavārahasvāmin here in the forest.

The way Amṛtadeva describes the rituals he intends to perform shows how these activities were understood in the Gupta period. What makes the listing especially valuable is not the individual items – many appear in other inscriptions – but the organisational framework in which they are placed. The schema is as follows:

- Repair (*pratisaṃskārakaraṇa*). Amṛtadeva proposes to repair or restore whatever becomes "broken and torn" (*khaṇḍaphuṭṭa*).[62] This phrase is found in many charters but has not been explained. The words would seem to describe the renewal of the cloth used to drape the image and to the replacement of earthen jars, lamps, bangles, and other ritual objects which might be broken in the ordinary course of preparing food and making offerings.[63] The setting can be understood from Figure 30, which shows a goddess covered in cloth and festooned with bangles and garlands. Small terracotta lamps are in front and various foodstuffs, including coconuts, are at one side.
- Performance (*pravartana*). Amṛtadeva proposes to perform *bali, caru,* and *sattra*. We have already noted this set of offerings in connection with Piṣṭapurikā Devī; their nature is explored below in Section 2.6.
- Acquisition (*prāpaṇa*). Amṛtadeva seeks to acquire flowers (*puṣpa*), incense (*dhūpa*) and milk (*gavya*). The first two are mentioned frequently in Gupta inscriptions and are unproblematic in the *pūjā* context. Milk, however, is not mentioned in any other charters of the Gupta period. Mature forms of *pūjā* suggest that Amṛtadeva wanted to acquire milk so he could bathe the image with it. This supposition gains credence from the fact that images are known to have been bathed from at least the late fourth century.[64]
- Provision (*upayoga*). Amṛtadeva lastly proposes to provide or employ "*madhuparka*, lights and so forth" at the shrine. The *madhuparka* or the "libation of *madhu*" was a drink made using honey, ghee, and curd. The significance of this offering is taken up below in Section 2.6. As far as the ritual application goes, no distinction can be made between *upayoga* and *pravartana*, tempting as this might be; the verbs were used interchangeably in Gupta inscriptions indicating they were genuine synonyms.[65] The usage here shows that the *madhuparka* and other offerings were directed toward a temple deity. Any lingering doubts in the matter are removed by the Valkhā plates. These qualify the offerings as *devasya*, "of the god."[66]



30 Hirapur (District Khurda, Orissa). Yoginī temple, eleventh century. Goddess under active worship.

## 2.5. NĀRĀYAṆA

Reference to the Valkhā plates, from Bāgh in Madhya Pradesh, remind us that we have ventured far from the geographical and thematic heart of this study. To bring matters back to central India, I will take – as a final example – the Nārāyaṇa established and endowed by *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa in the mid-fourth century. This king was the first in a series of local rulers who controlled the lower Vindhyas near the Narmadā from the time of Samudragupta.

Bhuluṇḍa's first donation is recorded in a charter dated Gupta year 47 (CE 366–67).[67] This describes how he donated five villages and a water-tank to Nārāyaṇa so the rituals known as *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* could be performed for the god's perpetual enjoyment. In the introductory matter, the plates give a long and devotionally charged account of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. We have given this in full in Section 1.11 because it helps explain the relationship of subordinate kings to the Vaiṣṇava cult of the Gupta court. The devotional verses – exceptional in the fifth-century corpus – and Bhuluṇḍa's description of himself as *svāmināārāyaṇadāsa* – "the slave of Lord Nārāyaṇa" – suggests that this was the temple's first endowment.

Nārāyaṇa soon received further gifts. In a charter dated Gupta year 50 (CE 369–70), Bhuluṇḍa is recorded as giving an additional village to support the god's worship.[68] The reason for this additional gift is suggested by the

statement that perfume (*gandha*) and incense (*dhūpa*) were to be provided in addition to *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra*. The provision of these offerings are recorded in the following way:

> yato [′*]dyaprabhṛtyā devakiyakarṣakāṅ[69] kṛṣanto vapantaḥ pāśupatā āryacokṣāḥ devaprasādakāś ca gandhadhūpabali-carusat[t*]ropayogādiṣūpayojayamānās sarvvair evāsmatpakṣatatkulīnā rakṣikapreṣaṇikabhaṭacchatrādibhis samanumantavyāḥ [|*] pratiṣedhas ca na karyyaḥ [|*]
>
> Hence from now onwards, the temple cultivators who till and sow seeds, the Pāśupatas and the noble Cokṣas who propitiate the god and who are employed in the provision of perfume, incense, *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra*, are to be recognised by all of our troops, kinsmen, police magistrates, officers, heralds and so forth. And let no hindrance be caused.

This statement provides useful insights into the operation of the temple and its estate. It indicates, firstly, that cultivators were attached to the temple and that these people we charged with cultivating the temple-land so the necessary offerings could and would be produced. Among the temple servants are a group called the noble Cokṣas. This is the only known epigraphic reference to Cokṣas, but in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* they are mentioned as people whose dialogues were supposed to be in Sanskrit along with Parivrājakas, Munis, Śākyas, Śrottriyas, and Śiṣṭas.[70] This is an important comment because it shows that the progress of Sanskrit in the Gupta period was advanced by and in landed estates. Of course this is apparent from the charters themselves in that they are always written in Sanskrit.[71]

The last grant to Nārāyaṇa, dated Gupta year 51 (CE 370–71), added several plots of land to the god's holdings.[72] In this grant, the offerings are listed as *bali*, *caru*, incense (*dhūpa*), perfume (*gandha*), flowers (*puṣpa*), and garlands (*mālya*). The additional land was apparently needed to increase the offerings and supplement them with flowers and garlands. Further clarification about the operation of the estate is revealed by the phrase: *devaparicārakaiḥ kṛṣyamāṇaṃ vapamānaṃ ca*, "ploughing and sowing by servants of the god." This shows that those who worked the temple-land were understood to be servants of the god and that, in a wider sense, the activities in support of the temple were an aspect of divine service.

The remaining Valkhā charters are concerned with a number of different temples, specifically with endowments in favour of Kārttikeya, the Mothers and Śiva as Bappapiśācadeva.[73] The relationship of these gods to each other, and to Nārāyaṇa, is shown by the Cāḷukya plates from Āmudālapāḍu. These belong to king Vikramāditya I and record the granting of a village to Sudarśanācārya, a Śaiva preceptor, on the occasion of the king's religious initiation (*śaivadīkṣā*).

While the record is thus Śaiva in purpose, it nonetheless begins with an account of how the founders of the Cāḷukya dynasty increased in favour through the grace of the Seven Mothers, obtained prosperity through the protection of Kārttikeya, and overpowered enemies by the very sight of the Varāha emblem that the Cāḷukyas acquired through the grace of Nārāyaṇa.[74] As the Cāḷukyas inherited the royal insignia of the Guptas – and their rhetorical mantle of sovereignty – the nature of this invocation shows that the gods mentioned in the Valkhā charters were not a random assortment of deities that happened to catch the religious attention of the Valkhā elite.[75] Rather, Kārttikeya, Śiva, and the Mothers had specific roles within the royal cult, variously augmenting the favour, prosperity, and power of the royal family. At the very centre was Nārāyaṇa – the god by whose grace the kings enjoyed power. He is the first deity to appear in the Valkhā charters and he is the god who is the mythological and theological centrepiece of Udayagiri, as noted repeatedly in Chapter 1.

## 2.6. PŪJĀ AND PAÑCAMAHĀYAJÑA

The offerings to the deities described in the foregoing sections – Piṣṭapurikā Devī, Śvetavarāhasvāmin, and Nārāyaṇa – were an important feature of the grants made to those who attended on these gods. Indeed, we can rightly assert that the main reason donors went forward with their benefactions was to guarantee offerings to these particular deities. And among the offerings that the endowments were meant to support, *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are repeatedly mentioned. These items appear, for example, in the Kho copper-charter dated Gupta year 177 (CE 496–97). This tells us that *mahārāja* Jayanātha granted a village for repairs and "for attending to the performance et cetera of *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra*."[76] More offerings are noted in Amṛtadeva's petition, detailed in Section 2.4: *bali*, *caru*, *sattra*, milk, incense, flowers, potations, and lights. Some of the charters of *mahārāja* Śarvanātha give near identical lists: *bali*, *caru*, *sattra*, perfume, incense, garlands, and lights. These things, the charters tell us, were offered to temple-gods.[77] The ubiquity of these offerings is shown by the Nermand copper-plate, an inscription found in the foot-hills of the western Himālayas. This documents a grant for "the giving of *bali*, *caru*, *sattra*, garlands, incense and lights" at a temple of Śiva.[78] Similar offerings are again recorded in favour of the goddess Śrī Bhagavatī Pāṇḍurājyā in distant Gujarāt.[79]

These examples show that endowments for the provision of offerings were being established everywhere in north India – from Bengal to the Punjāb hills and from there to Gujarāt and the central Indian hinterland. The nature of these offerings will be no special mystery to the student of Indian religion: gods in temples are typically decked with garlands, shown lights, and offered incense and food (Figure 30). That we are indeed dealing with a style of worship that continues down to the present is evident from the last of the Piṣṭapurikā Devī

inscriptions. The wording of this charter is practically identical to the plates already noted. But instead of the offerings being listed one by one, the record states that the grant was made to instigate *pūjā*.[80] This is a statement of utmost importance for the history of Indian ritual. The inscription is documenting the fact that *pūjā* was an overarching ritual category and that inside this category there were a number of individual offerings (i.e., *bali, caru, sattra,* incense, garlands, perfume, and lights). This is not exactly the first occurrence of *pūjā* in an inscription, but it is the first time that the word *pūjā* was used to describe the many things that are normally offered to a divine image in a temple.[81]

Now garlands, incense, perfume, and lights are not difficult to understand. We may even gain some insight into the aromatics used and the nature of lamps from the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.[82] The words *bali, caru,* and *sattra* present a different sort of problem. A suitable starting point for determining what these words might have meant are the inscriptions that employ the terms. A survey of the relevant records shows that *bali, caru,* and *sattra* are frequently mentioned in accounts of the *pañcamahāyajña* or "five great sacrifices." These sacrifices are not the solemn Vedic rites – those that drew our attention in Chapter 1 – but daily domestic rituals that have the brāhmaṇa's domestic fire as their normative centre.[83] In fifth-century charters the five sacrifices are repeatedly mentioned, but a specific rite, the *agnihotra,* is named only once.[84] Full lists begin to appear in the sixth century. The oldest example I have traced is the Sunão Kala charter of Saṃghamasīha, dated Kalacuri year 292 (CE 540–41). The five sacrifices in these plates are stated to be *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, agnihotra,* and *havana*.[85] A few years later, in a record dated Gupta year 252 (CE 571–72), the sacrifices are said to be *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, agnihotra,* and *atithi*.[86] This second list enjoyed wide currency and became the general standard in Cāḷukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants.[87] In all these examples *bali* and *caru* appear without fail, but *sattra* is sometimes missing. One early occurrence is in a Guhila copper-plate dated Harṣa year 48 (CE 653). The purpose of this charter was to confirm a grant to Asaṅgaśarman, a follower of the Mādhyandina branch of the *White Yajurveda.* The grant was made so he could perform *bali, caru, sattra, vaiśvadeva,* and *agnihotra*.[88] From eastern India, a copper-plate of Bhāskaravarman, the seventh-century ruler of Kāmarūpa, records that he established a special estate (*agrahāra*) for more than a hundred brāhmaṇas so they could perform *bali, caru,* and *sattra*.[89]

These examples show that *bali, caru,* and *sattra* were deemed, if not with absolute consistency then at least with some frequency, to be part of the *pañcamahāyajña*. This does not prove a great deal. The inscriptions do not provide descriptive definitions so we are none the wiser with regard to how these offering were understood, especially in the temple setting. One way of proceeding at this point might be to study the Veda and *śākhā* of the donees mentioned in the charters, the logic being that the texts belonging to the Veda

and *śākhā* of the donees might mention the five sacrifices and provide enough information to determine how each offering was understood. Although this seemed like a potentially productive approach, I soon found that the way the five sacrifices were listed in the charters was not determined by the recipient's Veda and *śākhā*. When a grant was made to a follower of this or that school, the list of sacrifices did not necessarily conform to the texts of that school. The texts frequently have a different order or structure or side-step the whole issue. For example, the *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra* (1: 10: 7) groups the sacrifices into three: the *daivayajña* (equated with *agnihotra*), the *bhūtayajña* (equated with *bali*), and the *mānuṣyayajña* (equated with *pitṛyajña* and *brāhmyahuta*).[90] This order may have appealed to the redactors of the text, but the scheme did not enter the epigraphic corpus. Grants to those learned in the *Ṛgveda*, to which the *Śāṅkhāyana* belongs, are not wanting, but in no case are the rituals called *daivayajña*, *bhūtayajña*, and *mānuṣyayajña*.

Looking at the problem from the epigraphic direction, we can return to the copper-plate of Gupta year 252 (CE 571–72). As just noted, this inscription was one of the first to explicitly name all five sacrifices. Now the recipient of this grant was Rudrabhūti, a follower of the Kāṇva recension of the Vājasaneya school.[91] Vājasaneya, which represents the *White Yajurveda*, is a patronymic of Yājñavalkya who is regarded as the founder of the school.[92] Their law book is *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (see Table 2 where the textual relationships are shown). This text indeed states that the five sacrifices are an important obligation, but it does not tell us what the sacrifices are.[93]

From these cases we should not conclude that those responsible for composing the charters in royal scriptoria were unaware of *dharma*-texts. The composer of the charter we have been discussing, the one recording a grant to Rudrabhūti, was an individual named Skandabhaṭa. He was accomplished in Sanskrit, the termination – *bhaṭa* in his name showing also that he was a brāhmaṇa.[94] Now Skandabhaṭa not only gives us one of the first enumerations of the five great sacrifices, but the first dated reference to Manu. It is so: in recounting the good qualities of the Maitraka kings, Skandabhaṭa remarks that Droṇasiṃha was "a veritable Dharmarāja, whose laws were the rules and ordinances instituted by Manu and other sages."[95] This demonstrates the pre-eminence of Manu in the mid-sixth century and the necessity of invoking his name, even in a grant where the donnee was a follower of Yājñavalkya (i.e., one of the "other sages"). However pre-eminent Manu may have been, he does not solve our problems, at least not directly or fully. This is evident from his account of the *pañcamahāyajña*. This runs as follows:[96]

> Teaching and study is the *brahmayajña*, the sacrifice to Brahman, the offering of water and food called *tarpaṇa* is the *pitṛyajña*, the sacrifice to the ancestors, the burnt

Table 2. *Overview of the Schools of the Yajurveda and Their Primary Texts*

| Recension | | | Black – Kṛṣṇa | | White – Śukla | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Kapiṣṭhala Kaṭha | Caraka Kaṭha | Maitrāyaṇīya | Taittirīyaka | Vājasaneyin | |
| | | | | | Mādhyandina | Kāṇva |
| Saṃhitā | Kapiṣṭhalakaṭha saṃhitā | Kāṭhaka saṃhitā | Maitrāyaṇīya saṃhitā | Taittirīya saṃhitā | Mādhyandina saṃhitā | Kāṇva saṃhitā |
| Brāhmaṇa | | | | & brāhmaṇa | Śatapatha brāhmaṇa | |
| Āraṇyaka | | | | Taittirīya āraṇyaka | Bṛhad āraṇyaka | |
| Upaniṣad | | Kaṭha upaniṣad | Maitrāyaṇīya upaniṣad | Taittirīya Śvetāśvatara upaniṣads | Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad | Īśa upaniṣad |
| Śrautasūtra | | Yajña śrautasūtra | Mānava śrautasūtra<br>Vārāha śrautasūtra | Baudhāyana Bhāradvāja Āpastamba Hiraṇyakeśin Vādhūla Vaikhānasa śrautasūtra-s | Kātyāyana śrautasūtra | |
| Gṛhyasūtra | | Laugākṣi gṛhyasūtra | Mānava gṛhyasūtra<br>Vārāha gṛhyasūtra | Baudhāyana Bhāradvāja Āpastamba Hiraṇyakeśin Vādhūla Vaikhānasa gṛhyasūtra-s | Pāraskara gṛhyasūtra | |
| Śulvasūtra | | Laugākṣi śulvasūtra | Mānava śulvasūtra | Baudhāyana Āpastamba śulvasūtra | Kātyāyana śulvasūtra | |
| Dharmasūtra | | Vaiṣṇava dharmasūtra =Viṣṇusmṛti | Hārita dharmasūtra<br>Mānava dharmaśāstra | Baudhāyana Āpastamba Hiraṇyakeśin Vaikhānasa dharmasūtra-s | Yājñavalkyasmṛti | |

> oblation or *homa* is the *devayajña*, the sacrifice to the gods, the *bali* offering is the *bhūtayajña*, the sacrifice offered to *bhūta*-s, the hospitable reception of guests or *atithipūjana* is the *manuṣyayajña*, the offering to men.

This is helpful to the extent that some of the sacrifices seem to correspond with the offerings listed in Gupta-period inscriptions. Others do not. What is particularly intriguing is that although Skandabhaṭa cites Manu as a great authority, he diverges from his prescriptions: Manu names the five sacrifices as *adhyāpana, tarpaṇa, homa, bali,* and *atithi,* but, Skandabhaṭa lists them as *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, agnihotra,* and *atithi.* Nothing more poignantly indicates the difference between what was blithely accepted as normative in *dharma*-texts and what was actually done in particular places at particular times. As a conclusion, this is not startling. Manu himself teaches that "He who knows the law must inquire into the laws (*dharma*) of each caste (*jāti*), district (*jānapada*), guild (*śreṇī*) and household (*kula*) and only then give his own legal opinion (*svadharma*)."[97]

Confronting the historical reality of this maxim in Skandabhaṭa's charter helps us frame an approach for dealing with *bali, caru,* and *sattra* as they were used and understood in the Gupta period. Discovering what these terms might have meant cannot be solved, we would aver, by appeals to this or that text – texts that may or may not have been known and, even if known, may or may not have been applied to the specific situation recorded in a charter. A very different approach is rather needed: we have to look at epigraphic sources that document the offerings as historical phenomena. The problem, of course, is that inscriptions seldom give us anything more than lists. The kind of discursive elaboration we might hope for – elaboration that tells us about categories and their contents – are found but rarely. Amṛtadeva's petition is one of the few cases, and for this reason we devoted considerable space to it. For the *pañcamahāyajña,* an analogous framework is given in the Cambay plates of Govinda IV. Although these plates belong to the post-Gupta period they are invaluable because they situate the *pañcamahāyajña* within a larger framework of Vedic ritual activity and, what is more, describe the king's meritorious gifts to temples and other civic institutions. The king's proclamation runs as follows:[98]

> vaḥ saṃviditaṃ yathā
> mānyakheṭarājadhānīsthiratarāvasthānena mātāpitror
> ātmanaś ca puṇyayaśobhivṛddhaye pūrvvaluptān api
> devabhogāgrahārān pratipālayatā pratidinaṃ ca
> niravadhinamasya grāmaśāsanāni prayacchatā mayā . . .
> godāvarītaṭasamīpasthe kapitthakagrāme
> paṭṭabandhamahotsave tulāpuruṣam āruhya
> brāhmaṇebhyaḥ ṣaṭchatāny agrahārāṇāṃ

suvarṇṇalakṣatrayasametāni balicaruvaiśvadevātithi-
tarppaṇārthaṃ dat[t*]vā | devabhogārthaṃ ca
devakulebhyaḥ khaṇḍasphuṭitādinimittaṃ gandhadhūpa-
puṣpadīpanaivedyādyupacārārthaṃ tapodhanasya[99]
sattrottarāsaṅgadānādyarthañ ca grāmāṇām aṣṭaśatāni
suvarṇṇalakṣacaturṣṭayaṃ drammalakṣadvātriṃśataṃ ca
dat[t*]vā

Be it known to you that I am permanently settled at the capital of Mānyakheṭa and that I am maintaining *agrahāra* and *devabhoga* (land grants), although these were previously sequestered, and that day-by-day I am issuing (new) village charters, to be respected continuously, for the enhancement of the merit and fame of my parents and myself . . . On the festival of the binding of the fillet in the village of Kapitthaka, situated on the banks of the Godāvarī, having ascended the *tulāpuruṣa*, I gave to brāhmaṇas six hundred *agrahāra*-s together with three lacs of *suvarṇṇa*- coins for the purpose of *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, atithi* and *tarpaṇa*. *And for devabhoga*, [I have] granted to temples (*devakula*) eight hundred villages and four lacs of *suvarṇṇa*-s and thirty-two lacs of *dramma*-s, for the purpose of (renewing) that which is broken or torn etc., for the offering of perfume, incense, flowers, lamps, food, etc., and for the purpose of providing outer garments and so forth at a *sattra* for ascetics.

The charter then turns to its legal purpose. This was to record the gift of a village to Nāgamārya, a follower of the Kāṇva school of the *White Yajurveda*. The village was given to Nāgamārya for the following reasons:[100]

balicaruvaiśvadevātithitarppaṇārthañ kāmyanitya-
naimittikakarmmopayoganimittaṃ darśapūrṇṇamāsa-
cāturmmāsyāṣṭakāgrayaṇapakṣādiśrāddhakarmmeṣṭikriyā
pravṛttaye carupuroḍāśasthālīpākaśrapaṇādikarmma-
nimittaṃ homaniyamasvādhyāyādhyayanopāsana-
dānadakṣinārthaṃ rājasūyavājapeyāgniṣṭomādi-
saptasomasaṃsthākratūpakaraṇārthaṃ
maitrāvaruṇādhvaryuhotṛbrāhmaṇācchaṃsigrāvastud-
agnītprabhṛtīnām ṛtvijāṃ vastrālaṃkārasatkāradāna-
dakṣiṇādinimittaṃ sattraprapāpratiśrayavṛṣotsarggavāpī-
kūpataḍāgārāmadevālayādikaraṇopakaraṇārthañ ca

(The village of Kevañja . . . was bestowed) . . . for the purpose of (maintaining) *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, atithi* and *tarpaṇa*; to occasion the performance of the optional, indispensable and occasional rites; for the performance of *iṣṭi* ceremonies, i.e. the *darśapūrṇamāsa, cāturmāsya, aṣṭakā, āgrayaṇa* and *śrāddha* rituals at the beginning of a fortnight; to occasion the preparation of *caru, puroḍāśa, sthālīpāka* and so forth; for the purpose of (granting) priestly fees and gifts in connection with *homa, niyama*, and the study of one's Veda, and religious service; for the

> purpose of (providing) accessory assistance for the rites concerning the *rājasūya* and the seven forms of the Soma sacrifice such as the *vājapeya*, *agniṣṭoma* and so forth, to occasion the offering of garments, ornaments, entertainment, gifts, sacrificial fees, etc. to various sacrificial priests such as Maitrāvaruṇa, Adhvaryu, Hotṛ, Brāhmaṇācchaṃsin, Grāvastut and Agnīdh; and for the purpose of (supplying) the requisite materials for *sattra*, *prapā*, *pratiśraya*, *vṛṣotsarga*, reservoirs, wells, tanks, orchards, shrines, etc.

These statements are important because they demonstrate that the king directed his generosity toward (1) individual brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda and (2) temple deities and their worship. His gifts consisted of grants to brāhmaṇas (*agrahāra*) and grants to temples (*devabhoga*), both in the form of villages and both supplemented by payments in cash. That there were two distinct recipients of elite patronage in the Gupta period is no secret – the epigraphic corpus includes grants to both priests and temples – but nowhere in that corpus are the two domains articulated with such clarity and attention to detail. Generous provisions for brāhmaṇas were an urgent matter if conscientious and punctilious twice-born men were to maintain their knowledge of the mighty smorgasbord of Vedic ritual and carry out the *pañcamahāyajña* on a daily basis. Generous provisions for temples were an equally urgent matter if these institutions were to fulfil their role as centres of worship and religious charity. In the grant of Govinda IV, the priest Nāgamārya appears to have been the head of a community of land-owning brāhmaṇas who spent their time performing Vedic ritual and temple worship. The key point for our purpose is that *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are enumerated as rituals these people were supposed to perform, some in the *smārta* context, others in the *pūjā* context.

But what, exactly, is the meaning of *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra*? Here I am not proposing to study the long and sometimes contested history of these words. This would fill many pages. Rather I will briefly examine a few illustrative contexts. We begin with *bali*. This kind of offering is frequently encountered in Brāhmaṇical texts. The material collected by Jan Gonda in his annotated digest *Vedic Ritual* shows that a *bali* was used to please or appease various deities in a number of different settings.[101] Some *gṛhya*-texts, for example, describe how a *bali* was to be offered at an altar in the northeastern corner of a priest's home in order to please the "house deities" (*gṛhadevatā*), the "house-site deities" (*āvasānadevatā*) and the "lord of the house-site" (*āvasānapati*).[102] Beyond the domestic sphere, the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* (12: 1–6) describes how *bali*, expressly described as a lump of food, is to be carried away to a shrine as an offering.[103] Early sources, both textual and epigraphic, indicate that *bali* meant the tribute paid to a king, a meaning confirmed by later lexicographers who understood *bali* and *bhāga* as synonyms.[104] Although this may seem confusing, the basic idea is that *bali* is a portion of food that is presented to whomsoever it

31 Rāmgarh (District Vidishā, MP). Temple ruins on upper hill, offering-table or *balipīṭha*, fifth century. *The worn sculpture of Nandi on the offering-table is not in situ; one of the broken corner lobes of the table lies directly behind. Scale 50 cm. Courtesy of Anne Casile.*

is due, be it a king, a god, or some other deserving creature. This is how Manu came to define *bali* as *bhūtayajña*, the "sacrifice made to beings of all kinds." This catholic attitude toward *bali* meant that once images in temples were accepted as bona fide religious entities, it would not have been contentious for *bali* to be offered to them. Manu also classed *bali* as *prahuta*, an offering that is meant to be scattered or cast away.[105] This definition of *bali* is near to the cakes of food used in Tibetan religious practice; these are called *gTor ma* because they are meant to be "scattered" (*gTor ba*). The continuity of these ideas in the Indian setting is documented by three rituals known as *bali* that are performed in the Minākṣī temple at Madurai. One involves offerings made to the "Lords of the Directions" on a *balipīṭha* or offering-table, the second is made by throwing food in the air, and the third by piercing a pumpkin or lime as a surrogate animal sacrifice.[106] All three are intended to appease or propitiate the gods, and to ask them to deter or control malevolent agencies, especially evil spirits. The oldest offering-tables surviving in north India date to the fifth century and are found at Rāmgarh, the Gupta site near Badoh in central India (Figure 31).[107] Later examples in situ can be see at Hampi and other places in the Deccan. The early use of such devices over a wide area is shown by Cave 2 at Bādāmi. In this cave, there is a large lotus carved into the floor, immediately in front of the sanctum. Although there is no inscription, the adjacent cave has a

dedication recording an endowment for the maintenance of *bali*-offerings to Nārāyaṇa.[108]

I will now turn to *sattra*, leaving *caru* to last for reasons that will become clear in due course. In the old ritual literature, *sattra* referred to a long sacrificial session, normally one performed by priests for their own benefit and thus without a *yajamāna*.[109] Epigraphic evidence for this kind of performance is furnished by a mid-second-century inscription from Mathurā that commemorates a *sattra* lasting twelve days.[110] Later inscriptions, in substantial contrast, use the word *sattra* to designate an institution for the feeding of ascetics and needy people, something epigraphers have explained as a "charitable almshouse."[111] How a sacrificial session could turn into an almshouse is explained by the elaborate homologies built around the human body and sacrifice. This long-standing current in Indian thought led to the conflation of eating and sacrificing, the point being that the stomach and the sacrificial fire are insatiable consumers of the food poured into them. This is how the *Hitopadeśa* could make the seemingly bizarre assertion that "one should honour the sacrificial fire with the stomach."[112] If eating was a sacrificial act, then hospitality was, in fact, a sacrifice. This shows that the *sattra* of the inscriptions can be aligned with Manu's *atithi*, the reception of guests, also described by Manu as *manuṣyayajña*, the offering or sacrifice to men. To put the matter in practical terms, the community of brāhmaṇas – the primary readers of Manu's text – had an obligation to support fellow brāhmaṇas, especially those who might be on hard times. The offering of alms to passing mendicants and the poor was equally recommended because it deflected threats and added to one's spiritual merit.[113]

That the charitable provision of food for brāhmaṇas and the needy was supported by endowment from the mid-second century CE is demonstrated by an inscription from the days of the Kuṣāṇa ruler Huviṣka.[114] In Gupta times, the first occurrence of *sattra* in the sense of *atithi* is given in a series of records from Garhwa.[115] The key phrase in these records is *sadāsattrasāmānyabrāhmaṇa*. The relationship of this compound to the rest of the sentence is uncertain due to the damaged surface of the inscriptions in question, but it would appear that sums of money were put on deposit to support a perpetual *sattra* for the community of brāhmaṇas.[116] The framework in which a *sattra* of this kind was meant to operate is explained by the Bilsaḍ inscription of Kumāragupta. This records how a brāhmaṇa named Dhruvaśarman made a *sattra* at a temple of Kārttikeya. The *sattra* is said to be as "beautiful as a mansion's pinnacle," presumably because it was a handsome edifice, and described as "the best abode of virtue", presumably because virtue came to Dhruvaśarman as a result of establishing the operation.[117] What the inscription neglects to provide is the reason: why should virtue accrue from the *sattra* near the temple? An answer to this question is given by the pillar inscription at Poḍāgarh, a record that can be dated to the

mid-fifth century. This recounts how a king set up a shrine for Viṣṇu's footprints. Then, for the purpose of worship therein, he established a *sattra* to feed brāhmaṇas, wandering ascetics, and the destitute.[118] This information is crucial for the history of religious institutions in the Gupta period – indeed, it would be hard to underestimate its importance. The inscription demonstrates, firstly, that temples had become the loci of endowed charitable activity by the fifth century and, secondly, that this activity – termed a *sattra* – was conceived as an aspect of *pūjā*.

Clarification and further particulars are provided by a copper-plate of *mahārāja* Bhūta, a minor sixth-century king in central India.[119] The purpose of Bhūta's charter was to record the gift of two villages to a temple established by Vīrāḍhyā, the queen mother. This temple – dedicated to Viṣṇu as Jayasvāmin[120] – was among the most important in the clan's territory, and king Bhūta's purpose was to guarantee its religious activities through endowment. The case is analogous to the shrine of Nārāyaṇa established by the kings of Valkhā, discussed in Section 2.5. What draws special attention to king Bhūta's copper-plate is the description of the observances:[121]

viditam astu yathā mayā tantīyakāmrilikagrāmau
soparikarasodraṅgasabhūtavātapratyayau[122]
paramadevatapūjyārccanīyān ūrvviṃ janitrīṃ
rajñī vīrāḍhiyakāṃ[123] mātarm uddiśya tayaiva
kāritakabhagavatpādāyatanasya balicarugandha-
puṣpamālyadīpatailacchādyalepya[124] khaṇḍa-
sphuṭitapratisaṃskaraṇāya parivrājabhojyāv
ācandrārkkārṇavakṣitisthitisamakālīnāṃ
udakātisṛṣṭāv[125] idam idānīṃ
tatprāpīyāvasathopagatānāṃ[126] ca parivrājakānāṃ
devaśuśrūṣakadāsīdāsānāṃ ca bhaktacailādy-
apraguṇānāṃ ca bhaiṣajapathyabhojana-
yogodvahanaṃ karttavyam.

Be it known: In the name of the queen mother known as Vīrāḍhyā – progenitrix of the earth, venerable and worthy on honour – the two villages Tantīyaka and Āmrilika – together with the Uparikara tax and the Udraṅga and Bhūtavāta levies – have been granted by me, with a libation of water, for the enjoyment of mendicants, so long as the ocean, sun, moon and earth endure, for repairs to that which is broken and torn (and for the provision of) *bali*, *caru*, scent, flowers, garlands etc., and oil, garments and *sindhur* at the shrine of the holy Lord constructed by (the queen mother) herself. And from now onward, support – medicine and restorative food – is to be given here to mendicants, to male and female slaves in the service of the god and to those bereft of food, clothing etc., who come to the habitation acquired by that (temple).

The offerings mentioned in the charter include a number of things with which we are now quite familiar: *bali*, *caru*, perfume, flowers, garlands, and oil. What is peculiar is that *bali* and *caru* are not coupled with *sattra* in the usual way. Indeed, *sattra* is not mentioned at all. But the description of a habitation (*avasatha*) handing out medicine and restorative food (*bhaiṣajapathyabhojana*) can only refer to a *sattra*. I am fortified in this opinion by the evidence of the Poḍāgarh inscription, which, as just noted, shows that a *sattra* was meant to provide charity, that said charity was dispensed in a building attached to a temple and, finally, that the intended recipients were the destitute, wandering mendicants and – if circumstances required – brāhmaṇas. The evidence of king Bhūta's copper-plate is accordingly decisive: it leaves no doubt where the *sattra* was located, what it was meant to provide and the kinds of people it was supposed to serve.

While the foregoing discussion gives an adequate picture of the fifth-century *sattra*, before turning to *caru* – the last offering that calls for explanation – I should like to pause and briefly evaluate the implications of the information provided so far. The main historical issue centres on mendicants and medicine. As argued by Kenneth Zysk in his perceptive study *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India*, medical knowledge did not flourish in the Vedic schools because traditional brāhmaṇas had very entrenched views about pollution and ritual purity. This meant that medical knowledge – with its distinct epistemology based largely on observable phenomena – tended to develop in heterodox circles, especially among wandering mendicants. Before the emergence of classical Āyurveda, the Buddhist monastery provided an institutional home for the early medical tradition. Zysk's view is that medicine was later "assimilated and processed by Brāhmaṇas to fit into an orthodox Weltanschauung."[127] He touches on some of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence, noting that Hindu religious centres had, by the tenth century, integrated medicine into their religious life. Of special note is a thirteenth-century stone inscription from Āndhra that mentions a *viprasattra* provided with a physician.[128]

The copper-plate inscriptions show that the beginning of this Brāhmaṇical assimilation process – a crucial one for the history of Indian society – can be placed in the fourth century, the date of the first charters mentioning *sattra*-s in the temple setting. These *sattra*-s were designed to support and strengthen the place of the temple and to advance the interests of temple-based theism in Indian society. They seem to have been modelled on the mechanisms organised by Buddhists to support the *saṅgha* and developed as a deliberate counter to them.[129] Of course the Buddhist support-system remained active in Gupta times, a telling case being the copper-plate of Vainyagupta that records an endowment for offerings – flowers, lights, incense, and so on – and additionally for clothing, food, accommodation and medicine at a Buddhist *vihāra*.[130] So while the *sattra* of Gupta times certainly undertook charitable work, to understand the

institution as a "charitable almshouse" – as scholars have done to date – is to conjure up some sort of Victorian building for lost souls rather than a dynamic organisation with ambitious socio-religious aims. The almshouse notion is especially infelicitous because it obscures the fact that the *sattra* welcomed brāhmaṇas, mendicants, devotees, and temple-servants. Under the umbrella of the temple, backed by hefty endowments and protected by the state, the *sattra* gave these people a base from which they could propagate a new religious dispensation. The temple and *sattra* provided an institutional place and space for those practices and knowledges that stood outside the tightly-circumscribed ambit of the old Vedic schools. Of course Buddhism had played this role and continued to do so in the Gupta period. The point is that temples, unlike Buddhism, were allied with ancient orthodoxy. Those responsible for introducing the powerful theistic vision of the godhead in the temple – and for introducing *pūjā* as an appropriate form of divine service – attempted to link their cult to the Veda and refer it to Vedic tradition. This was because the Veda and its ancillaries were accepted as the final source of authority with regard to sacred knowledge. The point is that religious "innovation" could not be defined as such – it had to be understood in terms of the Veda rather than vice versa. The aim was not to show that new practices were superior to the old, or even to shroud new cults in ancient clothing. Rather, the aim was to prove that the new was nothing more than the old, a simple rephrasing of the old using contemporary terminology.[131]

This historical examination of the *sattra* – and desultory foray into the theory of sacred knowledge – explains the two-tier system of patronage (i.e., why kings supported both temples and orthodox brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda). This is the arrangement detailed in the copper-plate charter of Govinda IV, quoted in extenso previously. As will be recalled, this charter first tells us that Govinda IV gave money and land to brāhmaṇas so they could perform the five great sacrifices – a staple of Vedic domestic ritual. The king then gave money and land to temples "for the purpose of (renewing) that which is broken or torn etc., for the offering of perfume, incense, flowers, lamps, food, etc., and for the purpose of providing outer garments and so forth at a *sattra* for ascetics."[132] This simply continues and reaffirms what is documented in the Gupta period (i.e., that *sattra*-activities took place at the temple, that they were understood to be part of the offerings made to please the deity, and that the charitable provisions involved clothing as well as food).[133] Govinda's inscription further explains how Amarasiṃha – a fifth-century author as noted in Section 1.11 – could define a *sattra* as the perpetual giving of garments.[134]

In the post-Gupta period, charitable *sattra*-s were established with considerable frequency. As an example we can take another charter of Govinda IV that recounts how he granted land to a host of brāhmaṇas for the purpose of a *sattra*.[135] The donees in these grants held donations for their own spiritual and

material benefit, that is to say, they were at once trustees and beneficiaries – a self-serving practice happily continued by Oxford dons if otherwise illegal in our own time. This conclusively shows that if a *sattra* was a long sacrificial session undertaken for the benefit of the officiants, and if eating and charitable hospitality were equal to sacrificing, then any long-term arrangement that allowed brāhmaṇas to provide food and clothing to needy brāhmaṇas, wandering mendicants, and the destitute could be deemed a *sattra*.

We come finally to *caru*. This is described in textual sources as a thick porridge prepared from un-pounded rice or barley grains, cooked in water with butter or milk.[136] This was used in a number of ritual settings, the recipients being gods or men depending on the circumstances.[137] So like *bali*, with which it is sometimes contrasted, *caru* was a widely used offering. In the epigraphic lists, however, the word *caru* was used to describe a ritual rather than a substance, just as *bali* is actually short for *baliharaṇa*, the offering of *bali*. Manu clarifies the fact that *bali* refers to a ritual process by saying that it is also *bhūtayajña*. But what sort of *yajña* lies behind *caru*? The problem is that *caru*, as a ritual rather than a substance, is peculiar to epigraphic usage, at least as far as I have been able to determine. Despite this limitation, we can tease out the meaning by a process of deduction. Firstly, *caru* cannot be *bali* / *bhūtayajña*, and it cannot be *sattra* / *atithi* / *manuṣyayajña* because *caru* is repeatedly mentioned with these offerings and was thus meant to be distinguished from them. The same applies to *vaiśvadeva* and *agnihotra*. These rites appear in lists with *caru*, the obvious implication being that *vaiśvadeva* and *agnihotra* are different forms of worship. We can next eliminate *tarpaṇa* and *pitṛyajña* because the *caru*-offering was not a libation of water and was not directed toward the manes. Finally, *caru* cannot be *svādhyāya* / *brahmayajña* because it involved a substance, the cooked porridge, not a sacred text. This means that *caru* can only be *homa* / *devayajña*.

The conclusion that *caru* referred to a *homa* or burnt offering is confirmed by textual sources. In Amarasiṃha, *caru* is defined as a cooked oblation and the fourteenth-century commentator Mallinātha notes that this cooked offering was in fire.[138] That Mallinātha was carrying forward an ancient understanding is shown by the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, a text of the Taittirīya branch of the *Black Yajurveda* (see Table 2). This *sūtra* prescribes that a *caru* should be offered as an oblation before a *bali* is given to Nārāyaṇa.[139] We will return to this ritual in the next paragraph. More generally the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* says that "the *devayajña* is a *homa* to all the gods with cooked food at the *vaiśvadeva* sacrifice."[140] Manu condenses this definition by saying that *devayajña* is an offering made in fire. The word *caru* is not used in these texts but when all the evidence is taken into account, the indication is that the *caru* was offered as a *homa*. This means that the temple-gods mentioned in our copper-plate charters were offered cooked porridge as a burnt offering. Although Vedic in origin, the *homa* has

been retained in nearly all extended *pūjā* ceremonies, and *homa*-s are still actively performed in south India with the particulars preserved in ritual manuals.[141] In Buddhist circles, *homa* also holds an important place, its organisational structure based on Vedic models if its ends consciously modified.[142] For the purposes of this study, the central issue is that the sixth-century charters indicate that *homa* was part of *devayajña* and that this sacrifice at the temple was considered a part of *pūjā*. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* makes fire offerings integral to the consecration of images. The relevant passages are cited and translated in Section 2.10.

The foregoing exploration of *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* has embraced much incidental detail and prompted a number of digressions and subsidiary conclusions. The impression – should we take the matter no further – would be that *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are entirely discrete items of religious service. While these components of *pūjā* are obviously different in and of themselves, we need to remember that the early copper-plate charters dealing with temples almost always mention them together. So having defined the particulars of each offering, we now need to explain, by way of conclusion, how they were integrated into a single religious performance. Amṛtadeva's petition provides some indication of the relationship. The problem is that this, like most information in the charters, is little more than a list: there is certainly no indication of the liturgical sequence, the place where the rituals might be performed and the people who were involved other than the priest. For some elucidation of these points – all important for the history of temples and their endowment – we can turn to *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (10: 9–10). As just noted, this deals with the offering of *bali* to Nārāyaṇa. The ritual sequence can be summarised as follows:

- On the day before the performance, the Vaikhānasa officiant should invite twelve brāhmaṇas as guests;
- On the next day, he should establish a fire for offering at the side of a Viṣṇu shrine (*viṣṇor ālayapārśve*), on a river bank, or at his home and there perform the *āghāra*;
- Having strewn *darbha*-grass round the fire, he should place an image (*rūpaṃ*) on the grass to the northwest of the fire invoking the presence of Viṣṇu in the process;
- He should present Nārāyaṇa with a seat, water for washing his feet, and water for sipping (*nārāyaṇam āvāhyāsanapādyācamanāni dadyāt*);
- He should bathe the image and honour the god with invocations, a garment, an upper-garment, ornaments, water for washing the feet, water for rinsing mouth, flowers, perfume, incense, lights, unhusked grain, and again water for rinsing (*vastrottarīyābharaṇapādyācamanapuṣpagandhadhūpadīpākṣatā-camanair arcayati*);
- Having poured water round the fire, he should offer a *caru* as a burnt oblation with the *puruṣasūkta* and other invocations (*caruṃ juhuyāt*);

- He should present the god with boiled rice – mixed with molasses, clarified butter, and fruits – and water for washing the feet, sipping, and sweetening the mouth (*guḍājyaphalayuktaṃ pāyasaṃ havirviṣṇugāyatryā deveśāya nivedya pādyācamanamukhavāsaṃ dadyāt*);
- He should give the *bali* of boiled rice, invoking Nārāyaṇa all the while (*pāysaṃ baliṃ dattvā*);
- He should pour clarified butter into the fire, invoking Nārāyaṇa again; to the brāhmaṇas who have been invited and whose feet the officiant has washed, he should give new garments, upper-garments, and ornaments;
- He should honour them with flowers and so on and entertain them with white grains mixed with fruit, curd, molasses, and ghee (*brāhmaṇān pādau prakṣālya navāni vastrottarīyābharaṇāni dattvā puṣpādyaiḥ pūjayitvā ... ghṛtaguḍadadhiphalayuktaṃ śvetam annaṃ bhojayitvā*);
- He should give the brāhmaṇas gold as a fee to the best of his ability (*yathāśaktisuvarṇaṃ dakṣiṇām dadāti*);
- He should conclude the sacrifice with a hymn to Puruṣa.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this summary. The first and most important is that a number of rituals in the sequence correspond to the *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* mentioned in the early copper-plates. Two of the offerings are specifically named – *bali* and *caru* – and there is no doubt that these offerings were being made to Nārāyaṇa. Mention is also made of the other *pūjā* ingredients listed in copper-plate inscriptions: flowers, perfume, lights, incense, food, and drink. Of equal interest and importance is the way the text affirms the equivalence of *sattra* and *atithi*: the hospitable reception of brāhmaṇas at the start, and the gift of clothing, food, and money to them at the end, are essential ingredients of the performance. An unusual feature is the gift of ornaments, but this too is found sometimes in inscriptions.[143] The special purpose of the Nārāyaṇa *bali* as a funerary rite for ascetics in no way tarnishes the comparison of the *sūtra* with the copper-plates. An epigraphic reference to Nārāyaṇa *bali* in connection with the establishment of a *sattra* and an image of Viṣṇu at Bādāmi – and so not funerary in purpose – shows that the ritual had applications that are not preserved in the surviving literature.[144] Neither does the Vaikhānasa affiliation of the ritual disturb the comparison. The terminology of the charters followed a generalised form because they were issued to followers of every Veda and school. As long as the donees – Vaikhānasas or otherwise – respected the donor's wish (i.e., used the grant for proper religious purposes), the ritual particulars would be delegated to the priests in question. This is exactly what we would expect: grants were made to priests precisely because they stood in a received tradition and were specialists in ritual matters.

Our *discursivus* into the nature of *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra*, important in itself to clarify the nature of these offerings, has deflected us from the main point of the present discussion, namely that *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* appear in epigraphic

accounts of both temple worship (*pūjā*) and the five great sacrifices (*pañcamahāyajña*). Now I hope that the data given so far is enough to show that when *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are mentioned in the *pūjā* context, they are not simply parts of the *pañcamahāyajña*. The Vaikhānasa ritual just described and Amṛtadeva's charter, introduced in Section 2.4, show that *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* were a discrete and well-ordered triad, quite separate from other types of offerings. So to imagine that *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* were elements of the *pañcamahāyajña* that have slipped their domestic moorings and drifted willy-nilly into the temple framework would be to miss the point entirely.[145] Something rather more important has happened: priests have carefully and deliberately moved sacrifices from the domestic environment to the temple and attracted funding to support these rites in the new location. This has happened because priests were directing the offerings toward certain deities (i.e., conducting *pūjā* to the images that they and their patrons had established in temples).

The use of *gṛhya*-performances as a template for constructing *pūjā* – and the acceptance of *pūjā* as a valid form of religious activity – was facilitated by the nature of Vedic thought which is essentially a system of equations or *bandhu*, as Louis Renou has astutely observed.[146] Indeed, there is a fundamental and recurring imperative within the Indic tradition to forge equations. For *pūjā*, the most crucial equation was that made between gods and men, a *bandhu* articulated in many sources but first set out in the *Atharvaveda*, *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā*, and other works connected with the *Black Yajurveda*. The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* states, for example, that "there are two kinds of *deva*-s, the (heavenly) gods and the human gods, namely brāhmaṇas who have studied the Veda and mastered it". Sacrifice is divided between these two (i.e., oblations to the gods and fees to learned brāhmaṇas who are human gods).[147] The Tāḷagunda inscription, which belongs to the fifth century, summarises the matter in the simplest possible way: the twice-born who know the Vedas are gods on earth.[148] The implications of this are obvious. If gods and men can be equated, then the things done to receive and please a brāhmaṇa at home can be applied, by analogy, to welcome and please the gods in their temple-homes. The Vaikhānasa *bali*-offering outlined here proves the point beyond doubt. This ritual establishes a parallel between brāhmaṇas and Viṣṇu-in-an-image because both are welcomed in a similar manner and receive similar gifts. The analogy is publicly reinforced by the activities being set in a single ritual framework and conducted in the same ritual space.

That these ritual ideas were prevalent in northern India during the Gupta period is shown by the charter issued to Amṛtadeva. As seen in Section 2.4, this grant records Amṛtadeva's intention of making a number of offerings, among them "*madhuparka*, lights and so forth." According to *gṛhya*-texts, *madhuparka* is a drink offered by someone who wishes to honour a distinguished guest, be they a king, teacher, *snātaka*, or family relation.[149] But Amṛtadeva has none of

these people in mind. He is rather proposing to offer the *madhuparka* to Viṣṇu as Śvetavarāhasvāmin. There is no ritual text that describes this specifically, but the context can be understood from the *pūjā* outlined in *Viṣṇusmṛti* 65: 12.[150] This use of *madhuparka* in the worship of Viṣṇu leaves no doubt that the oldest known *pūjā*-s for which we have concrete historical evidence – those recorded in the copper-plate charters – were modelled on the reception of guests in the domestic setting.

What is especially notable is the degree to which the domestic paradigm for *pūjā* has been maintained in the temple of Jagannāth at Puri.[151] The main ritual has remained remarkably stable despite changes in the system of patronage over the last nine hundred years. The best priests first greet Jagannāth as a high-ranking traveller, giving him a welcoming aperitif – the *madhuparka*. They present the sixteen standard offerings that noble guests deserve, and they perform three sacrifices of Vedic origin in which food features prominently. All these things are done for the god's enjoyment: as Jagannāth's pleasure expands so does his spiritual and material dominion. At the head of this mighty tradition stand the priests of the Gupta period – men like Amṛtadeva and Choḍugomika whose names otherwise have been lost to historical memory.

Back in the halcyon days of German Indology, Paul Thieme deduced from passages in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that the word *pūjā* referred to the hospitable reception of guests and that the things offered to guests could be transferred to the gods and their dwellings.[152] A completely convincing proof of this may come from the discovery of "eine bestätigende Etymologie" as Thieme suggests. But Śabarasvāmin, the oldest commentator on Jaimini's *Karmamīmāṃsāsūtra*, reveals that we don't have to trouble ourselves with so much hard work. Slicing through philology's incessant Gordian knots, Śabara attacks the root assumptions of *pūjā* by simply stating that "there is no analogy between the case of guests and the sacrificial act."[153] Śabara could only make this assertion because his opponents in religion were arguing that valid analogies could be drawn (i.e., that just as guests are pleased when hospitality is offered to them, so the gods are pleased when offerings are made to them through sacrifice). But this is to anticipate Mīmāṃsaka arguments against temple images and the priests who conducted temple service, a subject that will occupy us in Section 3.5. For the moment, we only need know that those who were involved in the promotion of *pūjā* as a valid form of religious activity advanced their cause by the application of well-established *gṛhya*-practices and ancient *mantra*-texts. This allowed offerings of an ostensibly non-Vedic nature, such as flowers, to be appropriated without controversy. This use of Vedic material was part of the correspondence-building exercise that made *pūjā* conform to received tradition – even Vedic invocations could be taken as the temple analogue of *brahmayajña*, one of the *pañcamahāyajña*-s. While this explains the mechanics of the liturgy-building process, the wider social and historical implications of the change are revealed

only by the physical setting in which the new rituals were performed and by the people who participated in the rituals at these places.

## 2.7. FROM PRIVATE SACRIFICE TO PUBLIC SPECTACLE

Transactions between men and gods through the medium of *pūjā* are commonplace in Indian religious life. From the perspective of medieval and modern India, the workings of *pūjā* are so unremarkable that those reading this essay might wonder why I have paid so much attention to them. The reason is that the copper-plate inscriptions are the oldest historical and extra-textual records of *pūjā*. This is significant. One might argue from this fact that Gupta inscriptions record the ex nihilo creation of temple-gods and *pūjā*. This would be an extreme interpretation. Yet if the Gupta charters do not record the actual origin of temples and *pūjā*, what do they mark as the very first documents of these religious phenomena? To answer this question, a central one for the religious life of the Gupta period and the themes explored in this book, we need to look at the proto-history of temples, that is, the history of temples before they became permanent and monumental structures in the fifth century. We would go too far afield if we tried to examine this subject in a comprehensive fashion. A few textual and archaeological examples will suffice.

Shrines, sanctuaries, and holy haunts had long been part of the Indian religious landscape by the time of the Gupta kings. The *sūtra*-texts and epics indicate that such places were worthy of respect: one was supposed to pass shrines on the right and get down from one's chariot before approaching the god.[154] Shrines were also auspicious places where a person might repair to practice penance. That such places were few in number and peripheral from the Vedic perspective is shown by the fact that the deities in these shrines are seldom named. The rituals too are never detailed, indicating they stood outside the general purview of the Vedic and *sūtra*-literature. The description of a "*caitya* sacrifice" in the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* (1: 12) highlights these points.[155]

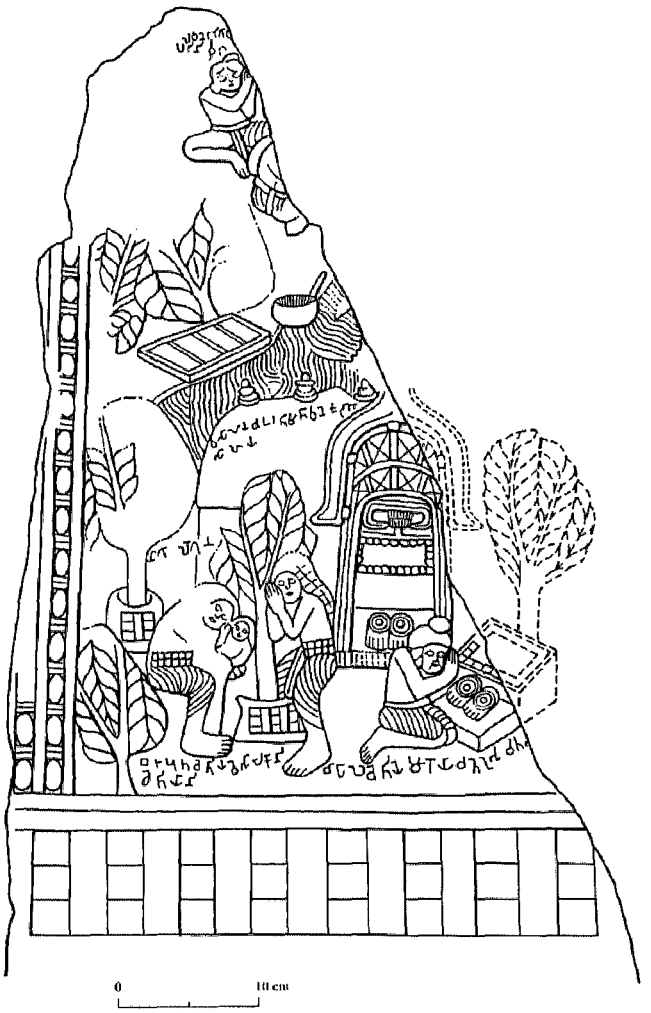
> caityayajñe prāk sviṣṭakṛtaś caitāya baliṃ haret || 1 yadyu vai videśasthaṃ palāśadūtena || 2 yatra vettha vanaspata ity etayarcā dvau piṇḍau kṛtvā vīvadhe 'bhyādhāya dūtāya prayacched imaṃ tasmai baliṃ hareti cainaṃ brūyāt || 3 ayaṃ tubhyaṃ iti yo dūtāya || 4 pratibhayaṃ ced antarā śastram api kiṃcit || 5 nāvyā cennadyantarā plavarūpam api kiṃcid anena taritavyam iti || 6
>
> At a *caitya* sacrifice he should, before the Sviṣṭakṛt (offering), offer a *bali* to the *caitya*. If, however, (the *caitya*) is distant, (he should offer his *bali*) through a leaf-messenger. With the Ṛg "Where thou knowest, O tree" (*Ṛgveda* 5: 5: 10), let him make two lumps (of food), put them on a carrying pole, hand them over to the messenger, and say to him

> *"Carry thisbali* to that (*caitya*)." (He gives the lump of food) that is destined for the messenger, with (the words) "This to you". If there is anything dangerous between (them and the *caitya*, he gives him) some weapon also. If a navigable river is between (them and the *caitya* he gives him) also something like a raft with (the words) "Hereby you will cross."

Although this statement is condensed and cryptic, with no clue given about the identity of the god residing at the *caitya*, three things are testified clearly: (a) that *bali*-offerings, consisting of lumps of food, were carried away to the *caitya*; (b) that the invocation mentioning a tree indicates the *caitya* consisted of a tree, perhaps with a dais and shrine; and (c) that a Ṛgvedic *mantra* was being applied to a ritual that was not especially Vedic in character. This last point is underscored by the fact that the *bali*-offerings were carried to a fixed spot where some sort of *devatā* was present.[156] So the offering was neither a domestic observance in a priest's home nor a public sacrifice that might be performed by a priest for his patron. The messenger carrying the offerings was dispatched with a Vedic *mantra*, the idea being that this enabled the process. The underlying assumption was that the deity resident at this distant place would be pleased with the *bali*-offerings and would return blessings or protection to the officiant.

A Ṛgvedic *mantra* was used in the *caitya* sacrifice because the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* belonged to the *Ṛgveda*. This meant that the brāhmaṇas who knew the *Ṛgveda*, and had the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* as their domestic text, were able to apply formulae from their *saṃhitā* to a new type of ritual. This was possible because the priests concerned had a general model (*prakṛti*) for deciding which auspicious rite (*karma*) might be done under different circumstances at various locations. This style of thinking allowed rituals to be used in a number of contexts and justified the application of known ritual forms and *mantra*-texts to new or special situations.[157] To put the matter in practical terms, because the offering of *bali* was not rigidly particularised in its application, it could find its way to a *caitya* and be appropriately offered there. Once this happened, other types of offerings could easily follow. This gives socio-religious perspective to the historical information contained in the Gupta copper-plates. They do not record – as we have said – the absolute origin of certain kinds of worship, but rather the process by which Vedic offerings and ritual performances were rationalised in the temple setting.

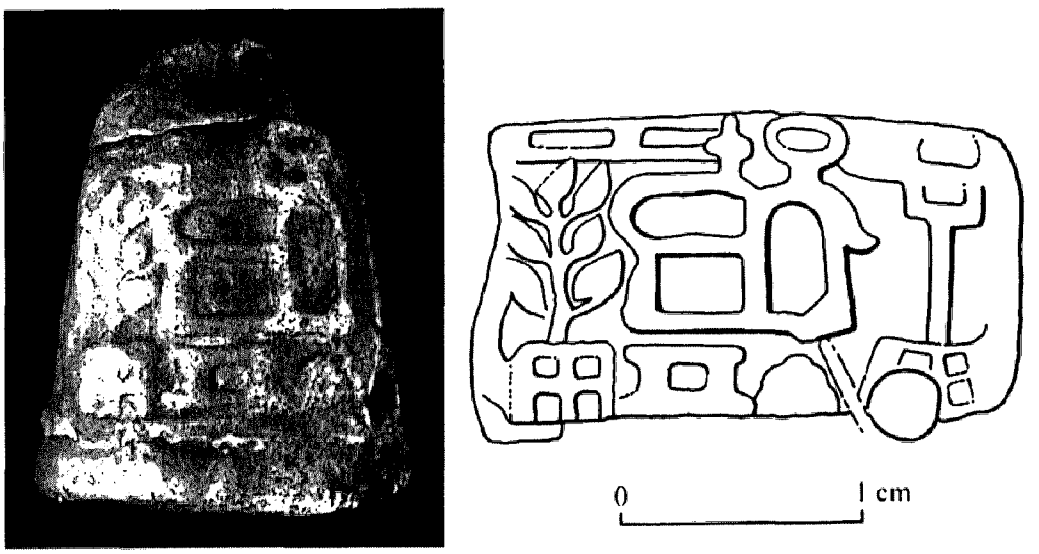
The *caitya* mentioned in the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* was located away from settled society – on the far side of a river and potentially in a forest where dangers might lurk. The location can be understood from early sculpture, a panel from Amarāvatī being an especially helpful guide (Figure 32). This depicts the Buddha's final days. As we know from textual sources, the Buddha travelled from place to place, stopping at sacred spots and shrines along his route. In the Amarāvatī relief, these locations are labelled, the small buildings being explicitly called *cheitya* (Skt *caitya*).[158] These sanctuaries were modest



32 Amarāvatī (District Guntur, AP). Drawing of an inscribed pillar showing scenes from the Buddha's life.

structures made of wood and thatch, apsidal in plan with *gavākṣa* arches – ogee in shape – over the entrance.[159] Built near a river with trees and tree-shrines beside them, the setting is remarkably close to that described in the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra*.

This idealised sacred landscape was replicated in many parts of India in the centuries before and after the beginning of the current era. Documentation for this is provided by a unusual bronze object from central India in the British Museum (Figure 33). Although the precise function of the piece is unknown, its thimble-like shape suggests it may have been used to decorate the top of a ceremonial staff. This may account for the imagery on the thimble: a shrine, holy tree, and other features in a religious precinct. The shrine itself, intelligible from the Amarāvatī relief, is apsidal in shape with a barrel roof and finial. The ogee-shaped gable at the entrance is shown schematically but clearly indicated nonetheless by an up-turned gable-end. The balloon-like object over the entrance represents a parasol sheltering the sacred symbol or deity. The object




33 Bronze thimble with drawing of appliqué decoration. *The decoration shows a sacred tree, shrine, altar, and religious standard. British Museum (1995. 10-18. 1).*

under worship is not shown, probably because the architecture was widely shared irrespective of sect or faith. To the left of the shrine is a tree surrounded by a railing; to the right is a standard or column, also with a railing. Immediately in front of the shrine is an altar for the offering of *bali* or *homa*. It is seen from above, the circle in the centre representing a fireplace or dais for the offerings. The projections on each corner correspond to the four protruding "ears" found on offering-tables (Figure 31). Beside the altar is a triangular shape representing a hillock, a frequent motif on seals and punch-marked coins.[160] This seems to show the shrine was built on or near a hill, the footpath up indicated by a diagonal line. The circular shape beside the footpath seems to be a tank or pond.

A suite of features akin to that shown on the thimble once existed at Sānchī – they are shown in the early reliefs at *stūpa* 3 – and a similar complex may be supposed to have existed at Udayagiri in the early historic period.[161] At a central point on the ridge, there is a prominent mound marking the site of a ruined brick temple, as yet unexcavated (Figure 3). A few steps from the mound is a platform that, as noted in Section 1.3, was the location of a column and lion-capital dating to the mid-second century BCE (Figure 18). There was a tank at the foot of the hill and the footpath up to the ridge went via the passage – an old route as shell-inscriptions engraved on the rock surfaces show. The deity installed in the early brick-temple was, in all likelihood, the sun-god Bhāillasvāmin, a point I have argued elsewhere in detail.[162]

Aside from the offering of *bali* in the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra*, some hints about how Bhāillasvāmin – and the other early gods established in temples – may have been worshipped is provided by the *Āpastambagṛhyasūtra*.[163] There we read how offerings were made to images in specially prepared huts (*kuṭī*). The ritual begins with a priest building two huts. In one he places the god Īśāna.[164] In the other hut

he places Mīḍhuṣī, the "bountiful." This is the wife of Īśāna according to the commentary. Between the two huts he places a third image, enigmatically described as the "conqueror." These gods have been "invited" or "summoned" (*āvāhayati*), the implication being that they were made of temporary materials for the purpose.[165] After preparing a vessel of boiled rice (*sthālīpāka*), the priest begins the offerings. He firstly gives the three gods water to drink and then makes them "touch" portions of the rice. With the recitation of formulae (*Yajus* 2: 18: 11–13) he then sacrifices the three portions of rice in a fire, each portion going to the god to whom it belongs. With a further formula (*Yajus* 2: 18: 31) the priest sacrifices a remaining portion to Agni *sviṣṭakṛt*. Thereafter he sacrifices to other gods including Kṣetrapati, the "lord of the field" (i.e., the tutelary deity of the soil). At the end of the performance, rice is given to brāhmaṇas to eat, as well as members of the sacrificer's family.

This ritual sequence shows how Vedic texts and styles of worship, particularly those of the *Yajurveda*, could be interwoven with the veneration of images.[166] Although the rite does not deal with gods permanently settled in temples – the huts were certainly dismantled after the rituals were finished – the description includes things that became standard elements of temple-*pūjā* in the Gupta period. A key feature is the cooked rice that is offered to the gods and then used as a burnt offering or *homa*. When the early copper-plates mention *caru*, we cannot be far wrong if we imagine a performance quite close to that described in *Āpastamba*. This understanding is corroborated by the *caru* included in the *bali*-offering to Nārāyaṇa, a ritual sequence summarised in Section 2.6. Other texts and rituals could be cited, but a comprehensive survey, however fascinating for the ritual specialist, does not alter the basic point that *Āpastamba* teaches and that we have already concluded from other material, namely, that the building-blocks of temple-*pūjā* can be found in the ritual repertoire of the *gṛhya*-tradition.

The ways in which Vedic knowledge-holders began to explore the implications of their *mantra*-texts and rework their supplementary literatures is well illustrated by the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, a work that combines the *dharma* and *gṛhya*-texts of the Vaikhānasa school. Willem Caland proposed that the work was compiled in the fourth century, a dating accepted by subsequent scholars who regard this as the newest *sūtra*.[167] This means that the Vaikhānasas were composing the *sūtra* when the Guptas were establishing themselves as a major political power. The text, as a consequence, is indicative of the practices the Guptas would have encountered among their subjects. The Dravidian elements in the Sanskrit of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* show that the school had long been resident in Andhra and Tamil Nadu.[168] So it seems unlikely that the Vaikhānasas were involved with the imperial Gupta court. This, somewhat ironically, increases their relevance. Apart from the intriguing possibility that a southerner like Choḍugomika may have been a Vaikhānasa, it proves that Vaiṣṇava image-worship was widespread

by the fourth century CE. This makes the Vaikhānasas germane to the study of Udayagiri, my point being that because there are no fourth- or fifth-century Vaiṣṇava ritual texts in the north, the Vaikhānasa school provides the best evidence by analogy. The usefulness of Vaikhānasa literature is reinforced by the school's persistent effort to create a religious system that combined Vedism and the worship of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa. This synthesis was developed theologically and ritually. The Vaikhānasas are indeed convinced that their form of image-worship is nothing but a continuation of the Vedic sacrifice. Thus, *Atrisaṃhitā* (65: 29) states: "If flowers, regularly offered, out of devotion to Viṣṇu, are of superior fragrance, the reward surpasses that of the horse-sacrifice."[169] The school does not reject fire offerings and other forms of Vedic ritual that are "shapeless" or "imageless" (*amūrtā*). Rather they combine the two, making the worship of Viṣṇu-in-an-image obligatory at the close of every domestic fire rite. One example that illustrates how the ancient and modern – I use the terms advisedly – were combined is found in the offering of *bali* to Nārāyaṇa, a ritual that has already drawn our attention. During this performance, the *Vaikhānasasūtra* prescribes that the priest should recite the well-known verse, "I shall proclaim the mighty deeds of Viṣṇu," that is *Ṛgveda* 1: 154: 1, the famous Viṣṇu *sūkta*.[170] This effectively fused the Puruṣa of the old Vedic hymns with Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa as a consecrated image.

The veneration of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa in an image is central to the daily cycle of Vaikhānasa observance: the god's image should be established in the priest's home and worshipped morning and evening at the close of every sacrifice.[171] The text gives instructions on how to make, decorate, and consecrate an image of Viṣṇu – rituals that could be performed in a domestic environment or in a temple. The motivation for undertaking this form of worship is clearly articulated: "The twice-born should vigilantly and constantly, either in his dwelling or in a shrine devoutly worship the Lord Nārāyaṇa. So it is understood that he reaches Viṣṇu's highest abode."[172]

The theology and ritual theory of the Vaikhānasas was based on the long-standing identity of Viṣṇu and the sacrifice, a theme first expressed in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and other canonical works of the *Yajurveda* – a point already made in Section 1.11. The Vaikhānasas accordingly declare that Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa is the sacrifice. He is indeed the cause of all, the lord of sacrifice, and he who consists of sacrifice.[173] These assertions were corroborated by elaborate homologies entirely typical in Indian thought: the five forms of the Highest Being (viz. Viṣṇu, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha) are incarnations of the Vedas and represented by the five Agnis (viz. Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya, Daṣkṣināgni, Anvāhārya, and Sabhya).[174] The chasm between the fourfold Veda, *varṇa* and *āśrama* systems and the fivefoldness of Vaikhānasa theology was bridged by the well-known assertion that the combination of four components make five as the whole counts for one more.[175]

The conflation of Puruṣa and Nārāyaṇa – and thus the combination of Vedism and the worship of Viṣṇu-in-an-image – was not unique to the early Vaikhānasa school. The Kāṭhakas of the *Black Yajurveda* developed similar ideas in their *Viṣṇusmṛti*, a work that combines *dharma* and *gṛhya*-material like the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (see Table 2 for the textual relationships). Of special interest is the description of a *pūjā* to Bhagavat Vāsudeva in *Viṣṇusmṛti* 65: 1–15. The god is conceived as a four-armed image with conch, discus, mace, and lotus, supported by the earth and draped with a wild-flower garland (*VSm* 97: 10). The flowers, incense, lights, garments, food, and drink offered to this god are accompanied by *mantra*-s drawn mainly from the *Kāṭhakasaṃhitā*. This use of ancient *mantra*-s is meant to show that *pūjā*-offerings are not a religious innovation but actually inherent in the Veda – despite every appearance to the contrary. To confirm that this was the case, the officiant was instructed to mutter the *Puruṣasūkta* at the close of the performance (*VSm* 65: 15). So the Kāṭhakas – like their Vaikhānasas contemporaries – were fusing the Vedic Puruṣa with Viṣṇu in a consecrated idol. The wide currency of these ideas in the fifth century is shown by the Mandasor inscription of Naravarman. This opens with an invocation that draws on *Ṛgveda* (10: 90) in describing the Puruṣa as "thousand headed" yet visualises him as Nārāyaṇa recumbent upon the waters:[176]

> sahasraśirase tasmai puruṣāyāmitātamane |
> catussamudraparyyaṅkatoyanidrālave namaḥ ||
>
> Obeisance to the thousand-headed Puruṣa,
> whose soul is boundless, who is sleepy on the
> waters of the bed that is the four oceans.

The material surveyed in the foregoing pages allows us to address the question with which we opened this section, namely, if the Gupta charters do not record the actual creation of *pūjā* and temples what do they record as the oldest documents of these phenomena? The answer does not lie in the individual components – the objects or the people – recorded in the charters. A list of these elements clarifies our point: (1) the brāhmaṇa proficient in the worship of images, often at a shrine; (2) the rituals he performs and the *mantra*-texts he uses; (3) the deity, in an image, to whom the priest directs his religious service; (4) the land given as an endowment; and (5) the ruling elite endorsing and protecting the arrangements. The copper-plates do not herald the advent of any of these things. What they do announce is their combination. The integrity of each part was maintained, and the authority of settled tradition accordingly preserved, but the combination generated a new institutional reality: a deity established in a temple controlled by a priest holding endowments endorsed by the state. So the copper-plates are important sign-posts on the route to mature Hinduism and its temple practices. Yet they are even more: if the temple as a

socio-political institution is the palladium of mature Hinduism, then the copper-plates announce the birth of medieval India.

Another feature of the copper-plates that anticipates the beginning of the medieval world is the public nature of their contents and the publicly visible results the grants were intended to produce. A good example with instructive data is the charter of *mahārāja* Śarvanātha dated Gupta year 193 (CE 512–13). As in many grants of this kind, the king issued his proclamation to the house-holders, beginning with brāhmaṇas, and to all the artisans in the village concerned.[177] They are told, quite summarily, that their village had been divided into four shares for the purposes of the grant. Furthermore, they are instructed to respect the king's order, to obey the donees, and to pay their taxes to them. The king additionally announces that he is in good health (*kuśalī*), the implication being that everyone in the village might as well get used to the new situation: Śarvanātha is well, and he is going to be in power for many years to come.[178] The donees in this instance were a consortium of merchants led by a priest. This seems to show an alliance between the merchants, who managed the land and revenue, and the priest, who controlled the offerings at the temple.[179] Because the temple is described as being built by the donees, the whole operation looks like the imposition of a temple and its administrative elite on the village. There can be little doubt that this would have changed the texture of daily life in every way. The temple and its apparatchiks, backed by the military muscle of the state – the messenger who delivered the king's proclamation was a kṣatriya – would have resulted in the immediate control of all surpluses and their redirection to a high-profile institution that had not existed before. The festival cycle and rituals at the new temple would have been witnessed by everyone, and participation would have been expected, if not demanded, from all villagers according to their rank and station.

The *pūjā* in this temple – to stay with the same example – included *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* as well as perfume, incense, garlands, and lights. As we have shown, *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are related to the *pañcamahāyajña*, the model for this kind of worship being the respectful reception of guests in the domestic setting. Now the textual sources for these rituals have defied chronological definition because the *sūtra*-texts, in the words of Jan Gonda, "deal solely with country or village life. Of the social and political conditions they contain almost nothing."[180] In actual fact, the world of the *sūtra*-s is consciously ahistorical and circumscribed. The texts appear timeless because their compilers have turned their backs on the urban centres and international economic networks of Buddhism and early historic India. The *Dharmasūtra*-s consistently enjoin that Vedic recitation must be suspended where there are śūdras or outcastes present, in market towns and even in one's own village if outsiders, however respectable, have visited.[181] Recitation is also suspended when the sound of music – a lute, drum,

34 Sānchī (District Vidishā, MP). Drawing of a relief panel on the north gate showing a festival at the *stūpa*.

or side-drum – is heard.[182] What the Vedic specialists are seeking to avoid are the lavish processions and religious festivals that occurred at places likes Sānchī and that were important enough to be featured in the relief-carvings (Figure 34). Those nearest the *stūpa* carry garlands, fancy banners, and other offerings. Further away, musicians beat drums, and two men add to the cacophony by sounding a pair of *makara*-headed shawms. The instruments are paired so the players can take turns breathing so the sound will be continuous. This mixed and noisy crowd includes visitors from distant lands to judge from the caps and boots which some of them wear. The redactors of the *sūtra*-texts have nothing to say about this kind of public performance and nothing to match its opulence and cosmopolitan splendour.[183] Tucked away in their villages, the Sūtrakāras resolutely maintained their domestic rites, focused on their literary traditions, and, in some cases, carried out the worship of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa in the privacy of their homes and village shrines. They purposefully shunned the dominant discourse of Buddhism and had no corporate networks like the great Buddhist monasteries and their subsidiaries.

This inward-looking world is not what we encounter in the copper-plate charters. These documents give us priests at centre stage, politically connected and socially dominant. These priests – men like Amṛtadeva and Choḍugomika – controlled high-profile temples and managed vibrant public cults. They travelled widely across the subcontinent with their new ritual repertoire, spreading the cause of image-worship among the ruling classes. Their purpose was to garner land-grants in favour of their religious activities and to develop an

infrastructure that effectively countered the support-system developed by Buddhists for the *saṅgha*.[184] The juxtaposition of the domestic world of the *sūtra*-tradition with the public cult of the temple may be overdrawn – the two overlapped for centuries – but it highlights the degree to which ritual, social, and economic relationships were changing in the time of the Guptas. As already noted, this was a change of configuration rather than components. The new relationship between *pūjā*, priest, image, patron, and land was a powerful synergism that produced temple-based Hinduism. This world – in part Vedic but radically different from what went before – did not emerge in an organic, subconscious, or accidental fashion from some sort of socio-religious plasma; it was consciously created by members of the priesthood – an intellectual and religious elite with clear aims and certain purposes. As Giles Tarabout has discovered through his diligent ethnographic labours: "it becomes very difficult to subscribe to any theory that would explain the development of image worship in terms of Brahminic concessions to the masses."[185] The temple priests of Gupta India established images in increasing numbers, accumulated endowments to support their work, and grew ever more powerful. As they did so, ancient forms of worship and everything they represented were displaced. By the early sixth century, these priests and their temples had changed the religious landscape of India forever.

## 2.8. PERSON AND PROPERTY

The foregoing discussion has ranged widely over gods, offerings, priests, patrons, and property. However engrossing and important the details may be, they would stand at naught but for temple-gods. These entities, gods-within-images, stand at the very heart of temple culture. Without images, there would be no need for *pūjā* offerings; without *pūjā* offering, no need for specialist priests; without specialist priests, no endowments to support their ritual work. And without all these things working together, there would be no economic or religious basis for monumentalisation: no inscribed stone tablets chronicling the construction of temples; no copper-plates recording endowments; no manuals and commentaries explaining the nature, purpose, and meaning of temple ritual; no architecture, sculpture, and attendant arts; no parading of gods on festival days; no great religious centres with their myriad shrines; and no pan-Indian networks of pilgrimage. So living images are essential and necessary. The student of Indian religion will not find this an insightful observation – indeed the obviousness of the point is more noteworthy than not. We highlight the matter because the copper-plate charters of the Gupta age provide the first written evidence of these living images. This is not immediately obvious from the records themselves: they present us with a mature cult in almost every particular – nothing about them seems "formative." Again this is not

surprising: cultural phenomena have frequently appeared with great suddenness in India. In the memorable words of Lionel D. Barnett, Keeper of Oriental Printed Books and MSS at the British Museum: "In India there is no twilight before dawn. In the darkness the eastern sky suddenly flushes, and the ruddy edge of the morning sun swiftly leaps upon the horizon. And it is so with the history of the great people which has led the van of Indian culture."[186] The Gupta charters conform to Barnett's perspicacious maxim in every respect: they do not hint at the naissance of temple-gods by making apologies in their favour – they simply present them as fully formed and self-evident.

The central and fundamental assumption that the copper-plates make about temple-gods is that they are sentient beings. This is shown by *pūjā* offerings. The logic of this assertion perhaps needs a little explanation. The working model for *pūjā*, as we have seen, was the domestic sacrifice and the reception of guests. These rites, also as we have seen, were moved from the domestic environment to the temple to develop a ritual repertoire for the image-cult. Just as guests received offerings in the home, so the gods received offerings in the temple. This is clearly laid out in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. Returning again to the *bali*-offering to Nārāyaṇa summarised in Section 2.6, the text prescribes that the image of Viṣṇu and the brāhmaṇas attending as guests should receive the same offering: garments, upper-garments, ornaments, flowers, food, and drink. This parallel is important because it shows that temple deities were deemed to be persons. Of course the gods were not persons in a mundane sense – guests or relatives who might knock on a brāhmaṇa's door and avail themselves of his generosity. Nonetheless, the gods were regarded and treated as persons typologically (i.e., as beings who were fully real and sentient). Substances were offered for their enjoyment – food, incense, perfume, and flowers – and activities were organised that ostensibly pleased them – the provision of food and clothing for wandering ascetics and the needy. In return, the gods redeemed devotees from sin, fulfilled material wishes, and granted felicity in this life and the next.[187] So temple-gods behave like real people who enjoy what is given to them and respond in turn. Now if a living image in a temple is a person, albeit a great one – a *mahāpuruṣa* – then in legal terms it is also a juridic personality. To put the matter another way, if the gods could enjoy food, flowers, and the like, and so demonstrate corporeality, then it follows that they could exercise various legal rights like other sentient beings. The most important of these rights for the historian of the temple and its cultural apparatus was the ability of the gods to hold the property that had been gifted to them.[188]

From a contemporary perspective we might characterise this as a legal fiction: de jure the property may have been held by the deity but de facto it was controlled by the priests in the temple complex. A similar understanding prevailed in Gupta times. This is shown by the fact that endowments were vested either in the deity or in groups of trustees. Examples of the first type

(i.e., property given directly to the god) appear at an early stage. The charter of Cārudevī, documenting her gift of a field to Lord Nārāyaṇa of the Kūḷimahātāraka temple at Delura, shows the practice was operative in the Tamil country from the early days of Pallava rule.[189] In the north, the plates of *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa, details of which were given in Section 2.5, show that grants by subordinates of the Gupta emperor were being made directly to temple-gods from the mid-fourth century. Imperial benefactions to temple-gods come a hundred years later in the reign of Skandagupta (circa CE 456–67). The details will be pursued in Section 2.11.

Endowments held and overseen by trustees were more frequent. Indeed most the charters we have discussed in this chapter involved trustees of some kind or another. Although we need to be cautious about drawing conclusions from a corpus of plates that must be small compared to the number once issued, the plates of the Gupta period nonetheless seem to suggest that complex social networks were invoked as a means of guaranteeing the continuity of endowments at the sub-imperial level. This use of trustees suggests that there were some reservations about vesting property solely and absolutely in the god. With hindsight, we can think of the early gods of the Gupta period as minors whose estates had to be managed by guardians before they reached maturity. As an example, we return to Śvetavarāhasvāmin, the god who has drawn attention repeatedly in these pages. The first charter dealing with this deity records that Ribhupāla gave some land to the god as a building site for a temple.[190] When it came to setting up a programme of worship, however, the endowment was vested in Amṛtadeva, the temple priest. The same is true of Piṣṭapurikā Devī. Lands were not given to the goddess but to the priests who promised to carry out her religious service. Such arrangements appear to have been widespread by the time the temples of Śvetavarāha and Piṣṭapurikā were built: we find them in the Indor copper-plate, the oldest Gupta inscription describing a temple endowment.[191] This recounts how Devaviṣṇu, a brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda, set up a cash endowment (*mūlya*) for maintaining a lamp in a temple of the Sun god. The endowment was held by a guild of oilmen who were charged with providing oil for the lamp in perpetuity.

The appearance of trustees in these examples should not prompt us to think that the sentience of temple-gods was being called into question. Aside from *pūjā* offerings – which require corporeality for them to have meaning – the creation of special holdings for temple-gods demonstrates that they were regarded as juridic personalities. These holdings were known as *devāgrahāra*, a term that appears for the first time in the mid-fourth century. An illustrative example, slightly later in date, is provided by the charter that *mahārāja* Jayanātha issued in Gupta year 177 (CE 496–97). The purpose of this grant was the creation of a *devāgrahāra* in favour of a temple of Viṣṇu that had been established by a family of petty bureaucrats.[192] The term *devāgrahāra* shows

that this kind of endowment was modelled on an *agrahāra*, the traditional holding assigned to a brāhmaṇa.[193] So just as *pūjā* was based on what might be offered to a worthy guest (i.e., a brāhmaṇa), so temple endowments were based on the kind of benefice that might be established to support a brāhmaṇa versed in sacred lore. This again highlights the degree to which men and gods were treated in an analogous fashion. We should not forget that copper-plate charters are legal documents pure and simple: they were issued solely to record actual and real transactions. The term *devāgrahāra* in the early copper-plates thus demonstrates that temple-gods were juridic personalities in the eyes of the law.

## 2.9. ENDOWMENT OF THE GODS

Perpetuity and permanence are constant themes in the copper-plate charters. The records frequently assert that the endowments were meant to be enjoyed forever, to endure, in fact, as long as the sun, moon, and stars: *śaśvatād ācandrārkkatārakkabhogya*.[194] This intention was backed by lines from the *Mahābhārata* that promised heaven for those who maintained endowments and hell for those who tampered with them. We have already discussed the epic passages in Section 2.2. Writing the charters on sheets of copper also buttressed the notion of permanence. The durability of copper – and the degree to which it was appreciated historically – is highlighted by the Kurud plates.[195] This inscription describes how the record of a grant was written on palm-leaf (*tāla*) but accidentally destroyed when the donee's house burnt to the ground. After it was determined that the donee's son continued to enjoy the village and associated lands unhindered, the authorities confirmed the grant – and ordered a copy on copper. What we are not told, but what we may assume, is that the possession of the relevant land was contested. Otherwise, the authorities and donee's son would not have bothered to record the domestic conflagration. The purpose of this little story was to assert the existence of an earlier document and so justify the confirmation of the land-holding.

The Kurud plates leave little doubt that the possession of written documents established effective ownership and that those enjoying land had good reasons for recording property transactions on durable materials. There was, however, more to this activity than the passive record of assorted legal facts. Charters were not so much "documents" in the ordinary sense but instruments through which interested parties established economic power and maintained social dominance. What I mean to say is that charters possessed a degree of constitutive power. This was articulated in the records with a number of phrases: for example, *tāmraśāsanenāgrahāro* [*]*tisṛṣṭaḥ*, "the *agrahāra* was created by this copper-charter."[196] Endowments in favour of temple-gods were couched in similar terms. Payments made for the endowment lands of Śvetavarāhasvāmin,

to stay with the example we know, was "turned into a copper-plate according to the rule for lands not yielding anything."[197]

Similarly, the Baigram copper-plates, also concerned with a temple, speak of the plate as an instrument of perpetual endowment (*akṣayanīvī*).[198] The word *nīvī* by itself denoted principal or capital. This can be deduced from Amarasiṃha who makes *nīvī* a synonym of *mūladhana*, i.e., "basic principal, capital."[199] This money could be invested on a temporary basis or permanently. If deposited permanently, it became *akṣayanīvī*, a "permanent endowment." While such endowments were organised from at least the second century, their use to support temple-worship and their documentation on copper-charters appears only in the Gupta period.[200]

The switch to copper from palm-leaf was not a technological improvement of a coincidental nature. The change was driven forward by a desire on the part of donors, donees, and the state to make their endowments permanent, stable, and perpetual. This intention is highlighted by the frequent statement that benefactions were to be enjoyed by the recipient, and the line descending through his son and grandson.[201] Temple-gods held land on similar terms. In the case of the gods, of course, there was no question of later generations: because the gods live forever, grants made to them were grants made in absolute perpetuity. The point is that if a donee and his descendants could be parted from their holding only when their lineage was extinguished, then a temple-god's holding could only be alienated if the god and his temple were destroyed. This happened several times in Indian history, most spectacularly – but not exclusively – under the aegis of the Delhi Sultans.[202]

Udayagiri furnishes an important case in point. The sun-god known as Bhāillasvāmin, whose temple once stood on the central ridge as we have seen, enjoyed a high reputation across north India and had accumulated important endowments from at least the ninth century. As the kings of Delhi sought to extend their control over the Mālwa region, they directed campaigns against the temple, the first in 1234, the second in 1292. The image was carried away and cast down at the gates of Badāun, desecrated there by the feet of all those entering the city. The temple building at Udayagiri, to judge from the tiny fragments that survive, was literally smashed to bits.[203] Why Bhāillasvāmin should have been repeatedly attacked and so thoroughly destroyed is explained by an inscription from Kadwāha dating to the early fourteenth century.[204] This recounts how the barbarians – in this context Muslim Turks – overran the earth and desecrated the temple nineteen times in the reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī (d. 2 January 1316). Despite these efforts, holy men rededicated the *liṅga* and pundits composed an inscription memorialising this fact. This shows why a living temple had to be attacked again and again: in order for the religious and juridic vitality of the god to be effectively and finally destroyed, the temple had to be razed to the ground and its very location expunged from local memory.

Only then could the god's land be liberated and assigned to new owners and new causes. Such efforts could fail however. Sultanate troops entered the temple of Jagannāth at Puri and consigned his wooden image to the flames. But Jagannāth was not so easily polished off. Through a temporary image that had to be constantly remade and reconsecrated, the temple priests at Puri turned impermanence into permanence – a reincarnating god who was so unassailable that his vast land-holdings survived even to the twentieth century.[205]

A temple's ability to accumulate wealth rested on the idea that the enshrined god was a living entity – a juridic personality with established rights to offerings and to land. We have already dealt with the legal issues. The way such gods were brought into existence is told – at least in part – by the copper-plates. We return to Śvetavarāhasvāmin and Piṣṭapurikā Devī as our examples. The first record mentioning Śvetavarāha reports that the administrative officer Ribhupāla wished to build a temple.[206] A little later, when arrangements for *pūjā* and repairs to the fabric were being organised, the temple is mentioned in passing, so we can safely conclude that the construction took place after the first charter but before the second.[207] In the case of Piṣṭapurikā, the first plate records that Choḍugomika had already constructed the temple. The next charter does not mention the building, only the endowment, so the actual temple was evidently a settled fact.[208] The two steps of construction and endowment are combined in the Baigram copper-plates. These recount how a temple of Govindasvāmin had been built but because it was poorly endowed, the founder's sons sought to buy some land so they could provide the god with revenue for the religious services that were needed.[209]

While these charters take us very close to the naissance of the temple as a socio-economic enterprise, they do not take us to its absolute beginning. This is not due to some unfortunate lacunae in the evidence. We should not think that some missing plate will reveal everything if only it can be found. The reason for this is that the charters – to emphasise a point already made – are circumscribed in their purpose and exist only to record actual and real transactions. Without the relevant constituents – an asset available for disposal, an owner ready to give or to sell, a god or brāhmaṇa ready to receive – there would be no transaction and no need for a charter. So the gods, of necessity, precede the endowments made in their favour: legal instruments are not issued to govern nonexistent situations or control nonexistent entities. The copper-plates we have cited as examples are, in fact, clear on this point. The first grant to Śvetavarāha records a land transaction and the precise reason why it took place: the donor wanted to build a temple. The second grant records another land transaction and the precise reason why it took place: the priest wanted to establish an endowment for *pūjā* (i.e., to arrange a religious living). The actual building of the shrine and the installation of the image that occurred between these two transactions was not the business of copper-plate charters and would

not have been recorded in such an instrument. Rather, the construction and dedication would have been recorded on a stone tablet. We do not have the dedicatory inscription of Śvetavāraha to complete the picture, but examples otherwise are not wanting.

## 2.10. DEVĀNĀṂ STHĀPANAṂ: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GODS

Stone inscriptions dealing with deities and their temples record two distinct kinds of activity: (1) the making of images and the buildings that housed them and (2) the establishment or dedication of images for worship. These activities – making and dedicating – are described in different ways. The terminology, to which we need to pay close attention, reveals much about these processes.

Inscriptions that document the making of images and temples, first focus on patrons and their building activities. The vocabulary is consistent. Although a host of poetic phrases could be used along the way, the construction is always described using forms of the verb √*kṛ*, "to make" or "to do." This usage prevailed in all religious settings and at all levels of society. A few examples will illustrate this point. To begin with the ruling elite, an inscription from Eran records how *mahārāja* Dhanyaviṣṇu "made a stone mansion of Nārāyaṇa . . . in his own district of Airikiṇa."[210] Such kings were surrounded by advisors, and these men were frequently patrons in their own right. Building activity at this level is well represented by an inscription from Gaṅgdhār that describes how a sanctuary for Viṣṇu was made by a minister named Mayūrākṣaka.[211] Among the citizenry, collective support of temple-building is documented by the inscription of the silk-weaver's guild from Mandasaur. This oft-cited record tells how the guild moved from coastal Gujarāt and erected a Sun temple at their new home in central India.[212] Descending to the level of the common people – at least as far as the records will allow – we can take the example of Mātṛceṭa, a man without rank or title, who "caused to be made the very best temple of the Sun, fashioned in stone."[213] Sectarian differences cannot be detected in this usage. Thus, the Buddhist inscription documenting the construction of the temple at Bodhgayā – probably the core fabric of the Mahābodhi itself – states that "this beautiful mansion of the Teacher of mankind, dazzling white as the rays of the moon . . . has been caused to be made by him . . . whose excellent name was Mahānāman, born in the island of Laṅkā."[214]

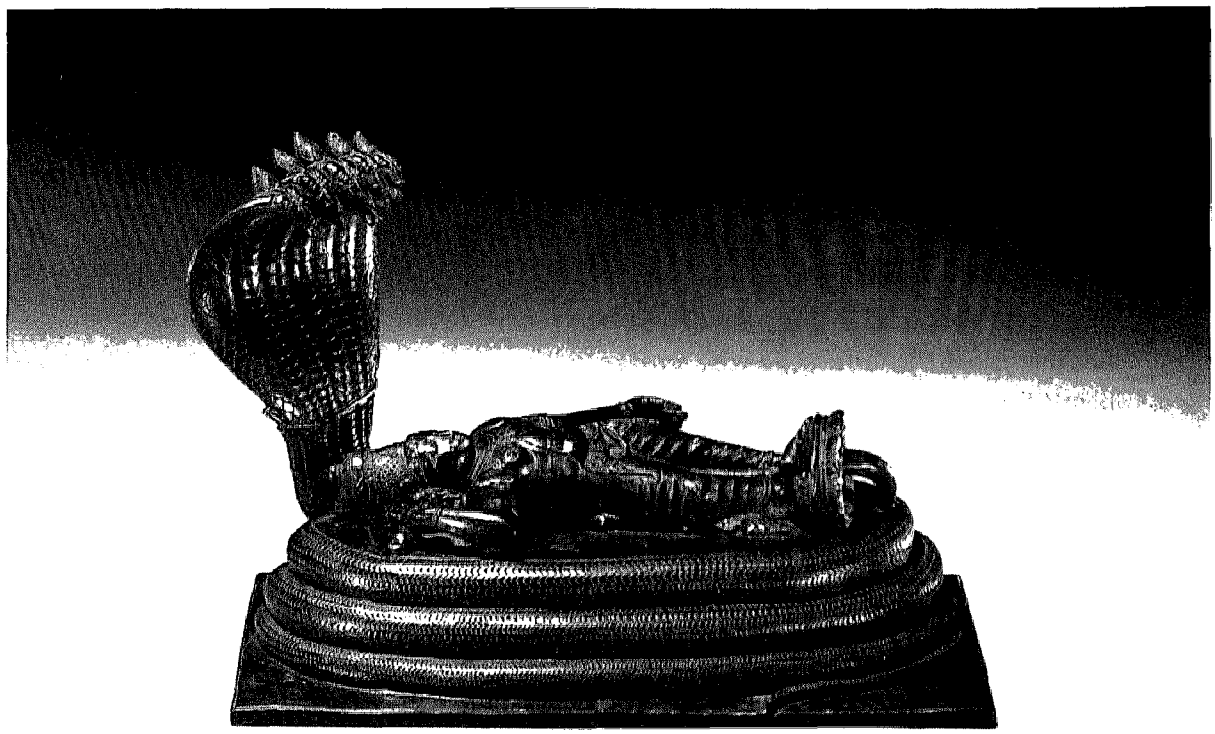
A different and more specialised vocabulary was used for the dedication of images. The verb for this activity is √*sthā*, *tiṣṭhati*, "to stand," frequently prefixed with *pra-*, thus *pratiṣṭhā-*, "seated," "established," and "securely placed." Jan Gonda has studied this term and demonstrated with encyclopaedic elegance that the ancient Indians were deeply concerned about a firm and ultimate ground on which they could rest, an imperishable and immoveable

support for their universe and for themselves.[215] These concerns were central to Indic thought and involved all aspects of life, not least temples and images when they came onto vogue. Inscriptions from Mathurā, which did not draw Gonda's attention, give the first indication that images were being established in considerable numbers. The surviving records, of which there are a number from Kuṣāṇa times, show that the practice of establishing images and other votive objects was especially favoured by Buddhists and Jains.[216] Closely related practices were also being developed in other religious circles -- notably by brāhmaṇas of the *Yajurveda* who appear to have been at the vanguard of image-based forms of worship.

The most informative early work to describe the establishment of images is the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, a domestic book of the Taittirīya branch of the *Black Yajurveda* (see Table 2 for the textual relationships). In an appendix entitled "Rules for the Establishment of Viṣṇu," the *sūtra* gives detailed procedures regarding the establishment of an image on a plinth. This was to be done in a shrine after an oblation.[217] The establishment was followed by offerings – perfume, flowers, incense, lights, and so forth. Among the Vaikhānasas – also of the *Black Yajurveda* – the worship of Viṣṇu's image is an indispensable part of the daily cycle of worship. The relevant portion of this *sūtra*, more abbreviated than *Baudhāyana*, runs as follows: "He [i.e., the Vaikhānasa priest] should make a likeness of him [Viṣṇu] not less than six fingers in breath and perform its establishment (*pratiṣṭhāṃ*) during the bright half of the month under an auspicious *nakṣatra*."[218] Once established, this image was to be worshipped daily after every obligatory rite.

A small bronze of Nārāyaṇa in the British Museum provides an idea of the domestic images intended by these texts (Figure 35). The image was collected by David Simpson, a surgeon in Trichinopoly, and purchased by Charles Townley in 1792. The sale catalogue, which is unusually informative, tells us that the images "belonged to a Brahmin of high caste and family in the island of Syringham, whose circumstance being much reduced in consequence of the war, he was with great difficulty prevailed upon by a brother Brahmin (a friend of the present proprietor's) to part with his household Gods, upon a valuable pecuniary consideration, and a promise that they were never to be removed from the house of a Brahmin."[219] As the images are now in the British Museum whose curators are, in the judgment of the *atirikta* managing director Suzanna Taverne, a "priesthood of relics" (*Guardian*, 15 September 2001), the promise made that the images not be "removed from the house of a Brahmin" may be regarded as kept.

A different part of the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtrapariśiṣṭa* deals with the worship of Viṣṇu in a temporary image. Instructions are provided for making the representation (*pratikṛti*) and for presenting it with the normal offerings – flowers, incense, lights, and so on. This Viṣṇu is "summoned" or "invoked"



35 Srirangam (District Tiruchchirappali, TN). Recumbent Nārāyaṇa on the serpent Ananta, eighteenth century. *Townley Collection, British Museum (1805. 7-3. 476).*

(*āvāhayet*) but not "established" (*sthāpayet*), so the deity needs to be "dismissed" (*udvāsayet*) at the close of the religious service.[220] The short-term association of the deity with the representation is the norm for festival-images made of clay. These images are frequently set up in temporary shrines or paraded through the streets. And temporary figures, as those attending religious festivals will know, are immersed in a river or in the sea when the celebrations are finished. This ostensible destruction of the gods has long fascinated foreign visitors to India, an early example of such interest being an image of Durgā in the British Museum.[221] Collected in Bengal some time before 1845, the image has been removed from its intended trajectory of fabrication, veneration, and destruction.

The two parts of the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtrapariśiṣṭa* that we have just cited, and exemplified with relevant objects in the British Museum, show that there were two distinct varieties of image from relatively early times, as indeed there are in Hinduism today: (1) temporary representations made of perishable materials with which the deity associates for a short period, typically the duration of a festival, and (2) durable statues made of stone or metal that are set up in shrines and in which gods are supposed to take up permanent residence. The difference between the two is highlighted in *Baudhāyana* where permanent

images are installed on a plinth (*pādapīṭha*). This foundation, steady in both a literal and legal sense, was needed because the god was deemed to actually reside in the image as a result of the establishment ritual. This made the image permanently sentient and – to reiterate conclusions already drawn – a competent legal entity with enduring rights to religious offerings and property.

That the sentience of religious images was widely accepted by the end of the fifth century is shown by coeval copper-plate charters, many of which have been mentioned in the foregoing pages. As we have seen, these frequently describe the temples as recent constructions. A good example is provided by the Uccakalpa charter of *mahārāja* Śarvanātha dated Gupta year 191. This documents the creation of a benefice in favour of the god Svāmi Kārttikeya that the king himself had established.[222] Evidence of this kind leaves little doubt that temple-building burgeoned in the Gupta period. The number of surviving monuments and ruins from the second half of the fifth century supports this conclusion, even though the geographical distribution of the temples and inscriptions has yet to be studied in a comprehensive fashion.

The rituals used for the establishment of images in these temples were summarised in Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*. Varāhamihira is especially relevant because he flourished in the early sixth century and belonged to central India: he was nick-named "Āvantika" – a native of Ujjayinī – and he studied at Kapitthaka on the banks of Godāvarī.[223] This makes him an exact contemporary of the late Gupta charters, an exceptionally precise context for Sanskrit literary evidence. Varāhamihira's relevance is reinforced by his detailed knowledge of religious images and his claim – detailed below – that he composed a specialist manual on the consecration of images. This indicates that Varāhamihira's account of the establishment process in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* was intended as a synopsis, written not so much for the ritual expert as for the better class of people – the *sabhya* mentioned in *BS* 60: 17 – who might seek information and guidance on these matters. For these several reasons I feel justified in giving the text of the chapter in full, together with a fresh translation.

60. Pratimāpratiṣṭhāpanādhyāyaḥ
diśi yāmyāyāṃ kuryād adhivāsanamaṇḍapaṃ budhaḥ prāg vā |
toraṇacaturṣṭayayutaṃ śastadrumapallavacchannam || 1
pūrve bhāge citrāḥ srajaḥ patākāś ca maṇḍapasyoktāḥ |
āgneyyāṃ diśi raktāḥ kṛṣṇāḥ syur yāmyanairṛtayoḥ || 2
śvetā diśy aparasyāṃ vāyavyāyāṃ tu pāṇḍurā eva |
citrāś cottarapārśve pītāḥ pūrvottare kāryāḥ || 3
āyuḥśrībalajayadā dārumayī mṛṇmayī tathā pratimā |
lokahitāya maṇimayī sauvarṇī puṣṭidā bhavati || 4
rajatamayī kīrtikarī prajāvivṛddhiṃ karoti tāmramayī |
bhūlābhaṃ tu mahāntaṃ śailī pratimātha vā liṅgam || 5
śaṅkūpahatā pratimā pradhānapuruṣaṃ kulaṃ ca ghātayati |

śvabhropahatā rogān upadravāṃś ca kṣayaṃ kurute || 6
maṇḍapamadhye sthaṇḍilam upalipyāstīrya sikatayatha kuśaiḥ |
bhadrāsanakṛtaśīrṣopadhānapādāṃ nyaset pratimām || 7
plakṣāśvatthodumbaraśirīṣavaṭasambhavaiḥ kaṣāyajalaiḥ |
maṅgalyasaṃjñitābhiḥ sarvauṣadhibhiḥ kuśādyābhiḥ || 8
dvipavṛṣabhoddhataparvatavalmīkasaritsamāgamataṭeṣu |
padmasaraḥsu ca mṛdbhiḥ sapañcagavyaiś ca tīrthajalaiḥ || 9
pūrvaśiraskāṃ snātāṃ suvarṇaratnāmbubhiś ca sasugandhaiḥ |
nānātūryaninādaiḥ puṇyāhair vedanirghoṣaiḥ || 10
aindryāṃ diśīndraliṅgā mantrāḥ prāgdakṣiṇe 'gniliṅgāś ca |
vaktavyā dvijamukhyaiḥ pūjyās te dakṣiṇābhiś ca || 11
yo devaḥ saṃsthāpyas tanmantraiś cānalaṃ dvijo juhuyāt |
agninimittāni mayā proktānīndradhvajotthāne ||12
dhūmākulo 'pasavyo muhur muhur visphuliṅgakṛn na śubhaḥ |
hotuḥ smṛtilopo vā prasarpaṇaṃ cāśubhaṃ proktam || 13
snātām abhuktavastrāṃ svalaṅkṛtāṃ pūjitāṃ kusumagandhaiḥ |
pratimāṃ svāstīrṇāyāṃ śayyāyāṃ sthāpakaḥ kuryāt || 14
suptāṃ sagītanṛtyair jāgaraṇaiḥ samyag evam adhivāsya |
daivajñasampradiṣṭe kāle saṃsthāpanaṃ kuryāt || 15
abhyarcya kusumavastrānulepanaiḥ śaṅkhatūryanirghoṣaiḥ |
prādakṣiṇyeṇa nayed āyatanasya prayatnena || 16
kṛtvā baliṃ prabhūtaṃ sampūjya brāhmaṇāṃś ca sabhyāṃś ca |
dattvā hiraṇyaśakalaṃ vinikṣipet piṇḍikāśvabhre || 17
sthāpakadaivajñadvijasabhyasthapatīn viśeṣato 'bhyarcya |
kalyāṇānāṃ bhāgī bhavatīha paratra ca svargī || 18
viṣṇor bhāgavatān magāṃś ca savituḥ śambhoḥ sabhasmadvijān |
mātṛṇām api maṇḍalakramavido viprān vidur brahmaṇaḥ |
śākyān sarvahitasya śāntamanaso nagnāñ jinānāṃ vidur
ye yam devam upāśritāḥ svavidhinā tais tasya kāryā kriyā || 19
udagayane sitapakṣe śiśiragabhas tau ca jīvavargasthe |
lagne sthire sthirāṃśe saumyair dhīr dharmakendragataiḥ || 20
pāpair upacayasaṃsthair dhruvamṛduharitiṣyavāyudeveṣu |
vikuje dine 'nukūle devānāṃ sthāpanaṃ śastam || 21
sāmānyam idaṃ samāsato lokānāṃ hitadaṃ mayā kṛtam |
adhivāsanasanniveśane sāvitre pṛthag eva vistarāt || 22

60: Establishment of Images

The learned man (*budha*) should construct in the south or east an installation pavilion (*adhivāsanamaṇḍapa*) with four arches (*toraṇa*) covered with the shoots of auspicious trees.

Variegated garlands and flags (*patākā*) are prescribed for the eastern side of the pavilion; for the south-eastern side, red ones; for the south and south-western sides, there should be black ones; for the western-side, white ones; for the north-western side, yellowish-white; for the northern-side multi-coloured ones; for the north-eastern side yellow ones.

An image (*pratimā*) made of wood or of clay confers longevity, prosperity, strength and victory; one made of precious stone leads to the weal of the world; one of gold leads to plenty; one of silver makes for fame; one of copper increases progeny; however, a stone image or *liṅga* (leads to) the acquisition of immense landed property.

An image that has been injured by an arrow destroys a responsible man and his clan; one injured with a hole causes disease, distress and ruin.

In the centre of the *maṇḍapa*, having smeared a cleared patch of ground with cow dung and then having spread sand and *kuśa* grass, he (i.e., the learned man) should place the image with its head resting on a throne and its feet on a cushion.

With a decoction produced from Plakṣa, Aśvattha, Udumbara, Śirīṣa and Vaṭa (shoots), mixed with every manner of herb, such as *kuśa* grass etc., that are considered auspicious, and with water from holy rivers, with the five products of the cow and with fragrant clays churned up by bull elephants in lotus ponds, banks where rivers meet, anthills and mountains, and with nicely scented water containing jewels and gold – with these things the image – its head to the east – is bathed to the accompaniment of the sound of the Veda, declarations of goodwill and the din of many musical instruments.

The best of the twice-born should recite *mantra*-s to Indra in the east and to Agni in the south-east, and they should [then] be honoured with sacrifical fees.

Further, the twice-born should sacrifice to the sacred fire with *mantra*-s to that god that is being set up. The fire-omens have been explained by me (i.e., the author, Varāhamihira) in (connection with) the raising of Indra's banner.[224]

A fire filled with smoke, turning to the right and sending out sparks incessantly is not auspicious. And the invocatory priest's drifting from or omission of that which should be remembered is declared to be inauspicious.

The *sthāpaka* should bathe the image, dress it in new cloth, provide it with nice ornaments and worship it with perfume and blossoms; (then) he should place it on a lovely new bed (*śayyā*).[225]

Properly prepared in this way, he [i.e., the *sthāpaka*] should rouse the sleeping [image] with song and dance (and) perform the installation at a time prescribed by the astrologer (*daivajña*).

Having worshipped [the image] with blossoms, cloth, unguents and the sound of conches and musical instruments, he [i.e., the *sthāpaka*] should lead it to the shrine (*āyatana*) with due care in a circumambulatory procession.

Having made many *bali*-offerings and having venerated brāhmaṇas and assembled worthies, and having offered a piece of gold, he

> [i.e., the *sthāpaka*] should set [the image] in the pedestal mortise (*piṇḍikā śvabhra*).
>
> Having specifically honoured the *sthāpaka*, the astrologer, the twice-born priest (*dvija*), the architect (*sthapati*) and assembled worthies, one is blessed with a happy lot here on earth and attains heaven hereafter.[226]
>
> They [i.e., learned men[227]] know that Bhāgavatas belong to Viṣṇu, the Magas to the Sun, the twice-born smeared with ash to Śambhu, those who know the rites of the *maṇḍala* to the Divine Mothers, learned seers to Brahman, the Śākyas to the all-benevolent Buddha whose mind is calm, naked mendicants to the Jinas; devoted to their respective deities, they should perform rites (*kriyā*) according to their own particular rules.
>
> The establishment of the gods is recommended during the half-year from December to June when the moon is waxing and stationed in a sign or half-sign of Jupiter, an immoveable sign and immoveable ninth-part being on the horizon, the benevolent planets standing in the fifth, ninth, first, fourth, seventh or tenth House, and the malign in the House of Increase [i.e., the third, sixth, tenth and eleventh] whilst the lunar asterism of the date may be some of the fixed or mild ones, Śravana, Tiṣya or Svāsti, on a fit day of the week apart from Tuesday.[228]
>
> This survey was composed by me in a concise fashion for the benefit of mankind; in [my treatise entitled] *Sāvitra* installation and consecration (are explained) separately in detail.

From Varāhamihira's overview of the establishment process, we can turn to some representative examples in the epigraphic corpus, giving special attention to those records that describe the attitude taken by devotees toward images and their veneration. The earliest evidence is provided by the Mathurā inscription of Gupta year 61 – the first genuine date in the Gupta era.[229] This record is crucial for the history of Pāśupata Śaivism and has been the subject of a number of studies, the most recent and important being that published by Hans T. Bakker.[230] This work obviates the need for an account of the Śaiva tradition to which the inscription belongs and allows us to focus on that part of the record that deals with the establishment process. The relevant words are not beyond doubt but they can be reconstructed as follows: *upamiteśvarakapileśvarau gurvvāyatane* [*samādhau**?] *pratiṣṭhāpitau*.[231] The purport of this sentence is that a pair of images were set up (*pratiṣṭhāpitau*) in a shrine for the preceptors (*gurvāyatane*) perhaps on the site of their *samādhi*. The word *āyatana* is frequently used to describe a shrine in early texts and inscriptions, but it can also mean a sacred ground or precinct in addition to a structural temple of the mature type.[232] The pair of images in the shrine were named in memory of two Śaiva *guru*-s, Upamita and Kapila, and so called Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara (*upamiteśvarakapileśvarau*). The inscription then closes with a statement describing how the memorials were to be understood and worshipped. This

exhortation is exceptional:

naitat khyātyartham abhili[khyate] [|*] [atha*]
māheśvarāṇāṃ vijñaptiḥ kriyate sambodhanaṃ ca [|*]
yathā kā[le]nācāryāṇāṃ parigraham iti[233] matvā
viśaṅka[ṃ] [pū[jāpuraskāra[ṃ] parigrahapāripālyaṃ
[kuryyā]d iti[234] vijñaptir iti [|*] yaś ca kīrtyabhidrohaṃ
kuryyād ya[ś cā]bhilikhita[m upa]ryy adho vā[235]
[sa]paṃcabhir mah[ā*]pātakair upapātakaiś ca saṃyuktas
syāt (|*) jayati ca bhagavā[ṃś caṇḍaḥ] rudradaṇḍo
(*)gra[nā]yako nitya[ṃ] (||*)

This is not written for celebrity but as a reminder and to make a request of the worshippers of Śiva. The request is this: "Having understood: 'This is the property of the preceptors for all time to come,' they should vigilantly maintain the property without hesitation, primarily by performing *pūjā*." Whoever would insult the *kīrti* and also whoever would denigrate that which is written above or below – he shall be invested with the five major and minor sins. And ever victorious is Lord Caṇḍa – the foremost leader whose *daṇḍa* is terrible.[236]

The first part of the inscription, as noted above, records that memorials to Upamita and Kapila were established in a shrine (*āyatana*) for the preceptors. In all likelihood, this shrine contained a pair of Śiva *liṅga*-s named Upameśvara and Kapileśvara. The pillar on which the inscription is engraved may have formed part of the doorway or gate.[237] The physical remains of the teachers were probably buried beneath the structure. This is suggested by the tradition of burying religious leaders of great stature rather than cremating them. The idea is that those who have established a sacred fire are cremated in a flame from that fire while ascetics who have renounced the world – and thus the daily operation of fires – are buried. One school's procedures for burial are given in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (10: 8). The precinct of the Mathurā shrine may have also served as a cremation ground for those who did not warrant burial. Such places still exist, an especially instructive example being the Śaiva monastery and adjacent burial ground on the outskirts of Jaisalmer in western Rājasthān.[238] The origin of shrines for religious teachers is a problematic issue and not one I will address here in a definitive fashion. However it appears that these shrines were first made by Buddhists who sometimes describe temples with Buddha images as *siddhāyatana*.[239]

Aside from the physical configuration of the *gurvāyatana*, the followers of our Śaiva *guru*-s are urged to remember that it is the inalienable property of their spiritual preceptors: *yathā kālenācāryāṇāṃ parigraham iti matvā*. The word *parigraha* has a wide range of meanings but is used frequently by Kauṇḍinya in his commentary on the *Pāśupatasūtra*-s in the sense of "property."[240] That this was the intended meaning is shown by the word's appearance in the

copper-plate charter of Vainyagupta. This records "the thrice daily and perpetual provision of perfume, flowers, lights, incense etc. of the Lord Buddha on the property (*parigrahe*) of the assembly of Mahāyāna monks who have attained the irreversible (level of spiritual development)."[241] The emphasis on property in the Mathurā inscription is important because it shows that the deceased *guru*-s were understood to be owners of property. This understanding is supported by a number of later liturgical texts that explain the conventions for naming images. The *Pratiṣṭhāmayūkha*, for instance, says that "for the sake of customary transactions one should always give the deity a name compounded with that of the patron."[242] That names were given in this way to support property ownership – what we have described above as the de jure legal fiction of assets being held by the deity – is made clear in the *Somaśambhupaddhati*. This stipulates that: "With devotion one should make over all that one can, such as gold, domestic animals and lands to 'the *Īśvara* named so-and-so' in order to [fund] the singing, instrumental music and other [expenses of the cult]."[243]

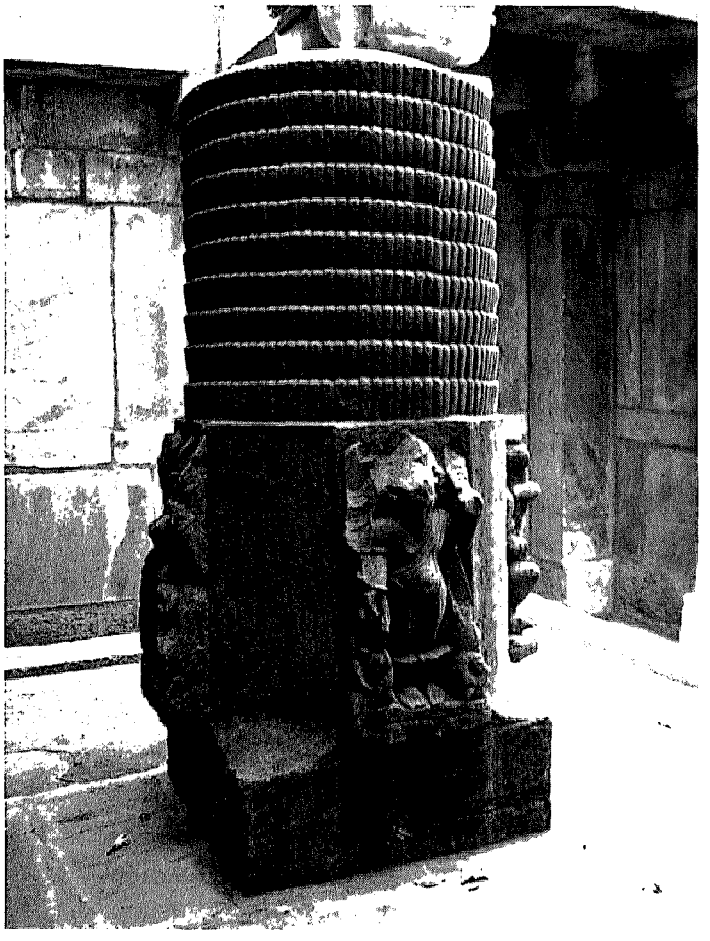
Aside from showing that eponymous naming for the sake of ownership extends back to the fourth century, the Mathurā inscription also shows that the departed teachers were worthy of receiving *pūjā*. As we have seen in earlier parts of this chapter, *pūjā* rituals were modelled on domestic offerings of food and drink, the idea being that those receiving the offerings are sentient beings (i.e., juridical persons capable of accepting and enjoying what was given to them). Now Uditācārya, the instigator of the Mathurā inscription, beseeches the Māheśvaras – the wider circle of believers without *dīkṣā* but nonetheless devout followers of Śiva – to contemplate the fact that "this is the property of the preceptors" and to maintain and protect this property by performing *pūjā* there first and foremost (*puraskāram*).[244] The underlying assumption, therefore, is that dead *guru*-s are still connected to the world of the living and able to receive both gifts and homage. Side-stepping the theology – this has been addressed by Richard Davis – the living presence of past teachers is shown by the use of the word *viśaṅkaṃ* to qualify *pūjāpuraskāraṃ parigrahapāripālyaṃ*.[245] The maintenance and protection of the *parigraha* was to be accompanied by *pūjā* and performed without hesitation (*viśaṅkaṃ*), that is, without the trepidation usually accorded to spirits of the dead. More specifically, the inscription is asserting that although past *guru*-s have been established as a living presence in the *gurvāyatana*, Māheśvaras need not be wary of them because they are not malevolent *preta*-s or *piśāca*-s. But what did the dead *guru*-s represent to those who were supposed to offer veneration?

The answer to this question turns on the religious nature of the memorials. The ending *-īśvara* in the names Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara points to the idea that the Upamita and Kapila were liberated from mundane concerns, their souls approximating Śiva after death – perhaps even before if they were particularly adept at yogic practice. The idea that propinquity to the godhead was

the end-point in the career of the soul was not unique to the Pāśupatas or even Śaivism generally – the early Vaiṣṇavas had similar ideas as discussed in Chapter 1. The point is that while the Mathurā inscription belongs to an esoteric stream of the Śaiva tradition, statements that were made openly in a monumental and thus public inscription were part of a pan-Indian doxy that continued for centuries after the Gupta period.

These ideas find expression in the Nermand copper-plate, a record that merits attention here in view of its early date and informative detail. The charter documents an endowment to support the worship of Śiva with *bali, caru, sattra,* garlands, incense, and lights.[246] In this respect, the plate is entirely conventional. What draws attention is the Śiva that received these offering. This Śiva was established by a queen named Mihiralakṣmī and accordingly named Mihireśvara in her honour, exactly as the later liturgical texts prescribe.[247] The queen established her Śiva at a place called Kapāleśvara. The worship of Mihireśvara was supported by a *devāgrahāra* created by *mahārāja* Samudrasena, the son of Mihiralakṣmī, probably after the queen's death. Samudrasena's religious sentiments are spelt out clearly in the charter: he was a supreme devotee of Maheśvara, friendly to brāhmaṇas and entirely dependent on the highest end (i.e., liberation or *mokṣa*). Mihireśvara, in turn, is called the divine Tripurāntaka, the maker of the visible and invisible worlds, the destroyer of all misfortune and the one who is compassionate to those who worship him.[248] These statements reveal how devotees in the sixth century understood their relationship to Śiva and the spiritual benefit they sought from his worship. They also show that eponymously named Śivas were not subsidiary or derivative forms of the deity. Mihireśvara was rather Tripurāntaka himself, nothing short of Śiva in his celebrated role as the destroyer of the three cities.[249] This is a point of prime importance. It demonstrates, on one level, that a *liṅga* named after a specific person represented the special object of that devotee's religious attention during their lifetime. But the existence of the *liṅga* as a discrete cult-object with its own special name also shows that the same devotee was not absorbed and lost forever in Śiva after death. Neither did the devotee's soul dissolve with the body, entering again the manifest cosmos as some of the Upaniṣadic thinkers proposed. The Śaiva soul, au contraire, was released from the fetters of existence to become an independent Śiva. The soul that has attained perfection becomes a *siddha* equal to Śiva, an autonomous theomorphic entity, separate from Śiva as Mahādeva but with all his powers and qualities.[250]

This theological vision is poignantly illustrated by the *sahasraliṅga,* an iconography that appears with considerable frequency from the late Gupta period.[251] In this type of representation, innumerable miniature *liṅga*-s are attached in serried ranks to the body of the main *liṅga* (Figure 36). The point here is that Śiva is surrounded by hundreds of devotees who replicate him but have not lost their individual identities in him. The configuration of Śaiva



36 Chandpur (District Lalitpur, UP). Śiva temple, Sahasraliṅga, eleventh century.

temple-sites confirms this understanding. Old places that are well preserved, like Batesar and Naresar in central India, have groups of *liṅga*-shrines clustered about the main temple. Some of the shrines are labelled with names like Śrī Krakoṭakeśvaradeva and Śrī Bhīturāṇeśvaradeva.[252] There are many shrines because each devotee and donor sought to become a Śiva in his or her own right. Further examples are not difficult to find. The inscription from the temple ruins at Pāranagar, south of Rajor near Alwar, describes how a prince named Mathanadeva granted a village to maintain the worship of Lacchukeśvara Mahādeva. The deity carried this name because Mathana's mother was called Lacchukā.[253] A second example, which brings us back to the Vidiśā region and Udayagiri, is the Śiva temple at Udayapur. This was named Udayeśvara Mahādeva after its founder and patron *mahārāja* Udayāditya (circa CE 1070–94).[254] These cases allow us to visualise the site described in the Nermand copper-plate: Mihireśvara would have been a *liṅga* in a subsidiary shrine, probably one of many established near the main temple of Kapāleśvara.

Epigraphic support for this interpretation is provided by the Śaiva cave inscriptions from Trichinopoly that record how Guṇabhara -- this was a *biruda*

of Mahendravarman Pallava – established an image so he could reside together with Śiva as a Śiva in his worlds.[255]

> śailendramūrddhani śilābhavane vicitre
> śailīn tanuṃ guṇabharo nṛpatir nnidhāya|
> sthāṇuṃ vyadha[tta] vi[dhi]r eṣa yathārtthasaṃjñaṃ
> sthāṇuḥ svayañ ca saha tena jagatsu jātaḥ||
>
> When this very Brahmā, [i.e.,] king Guṇabhara, placed a stone figure in the wonderful stone-temple on the top of the best of mountains, he made in this way Sthāṇu stationary and became himself stationary [i.e., immortal] in the [three] worlds together with him.

An important conclusion can be drawn from all this data, namely that the eponymous names given in inscriptions can be read as both *tatpuruṣa* and *karmadhāraya* compounds. Upamiteśvara – to go back to the pillar from Mathurā – is both the "Īśvara of Upamita" and the "Īśvara who is Upamita." The first represents the special object of Upamita's religious attention in this life, a concrete manifestation of his *iṣṭadevatā* that may have embodied the *mantra* he received at initiation. The second represents the form Upamita became after casting off the fetters of mundane existence. As we might reasonably expect, the transition from one level to the next in this hierarchy of religious identities was marked by death. To put the matter another way, death transformed a meritorious and noble person from a limited individual into a divine entity that was suitable for worship. It is important to note that those who remained in the world and were charged – like the Maheśvaras in the Mathurā inscription – with the maintenance of religious service were not worshipping the dead. Rather they were worshipping souls that had become perfect replicas of the deity and so the actual deity itself. We reached just these conclusions in Section 1.11 with regard to the Varāha at Udayagiri: this sculpture represents, among other things, Samudragupta after he had passed away and become an unfathomable *puruṣa* ( i.e., a Viṣṇu). The appellation of the Varāha in Gupta times has not been preserved, but other Vaiṣṇava images are known to have been named after deceased persons. The names of these gods normally ended with *-svāmin*, in contradistinction to the Śaivas who, as we have just noted, generally used the suffix *-īśvara*. An illustrative case is Vāillabhaṭṭasvāmin, the deity installed in the Caturbhuj temple at Gwalior. This god was named in memory of Vāillabhaṭṭa, an officer who served the Pratīhāra kings.[256] A precedent for this practice in Gupta times is provided by the temple of Muṇḍasvāmi in the Vākāṭaka kingdom that seems to have been named after Prabhāvatīguptā whose childhood name was evidently Muṇḍā.[257] An imperial Gupta example will occupy us in Section 2.11.

The naming of Vaiṣṇava temple-gods after specific individuals brings us to the relationship between Viṣṇu and his worshippers through the medium of

images. We have already dealt with the Śaiva understanding. The Vaiṣṇava position is elucidated by the *Kāśyapajñānakāṇḍaḥ*, otherwise known as the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā*.[258] Although this text dates to about the ninth century, it has some relevance because it belongs to the Vaikhānasas, an old Vedic school that has already drawn attention in these pages. The Vaikhānasas are – to repeat – theistically Vaiṣṇava while remaining bona fide Taittirīyas of the *Black Yajurveda* (see Table 2). The part of their *Kāśyapasaṃhitā* praising temple construction is exceptionally informative because it outlines the benefits that accrue to devotees when they make images and temples. Because the temple is the pre-eminent place for contact between man and god, the builder of a temple, he who makes this contact possible, will be the first to profit. He is the *yajamāna* – the terminology is deliberately archaic – and he will gain the same result as if he had built a Vedic fire-altar. The various stages of the undertaking produce increasingly elevated results: when the "lotus of Brahmā" is deposited in the soil at the centre of the building site, he obtains Viṣṇu's world (*sālokyam*); when the image has been established, closeness to Him (*sāmīpyam*); when the temple is completed, equality in form to Him (*sārūpyam*); when the sacrificial ceremony for Viṣṇu is completed, enjoyment and dominion (*bhogaiśvaryam*); when the consecration ceremonies are finished, communion with Him (*sāyujyam*). The description of this final state – *sāyujyam* – merits quotation in full. The ideas provide a close parallel to coeval Śaiva beliefs about the devout soul vis-à-vis religious images and the godhead.[259]

> pratiṣṭhite tyaktvā kalevaraṃ sadyaḥ śaṅkhacakradharaḥ
> śyāmaliṅgaś caturbhujaḥ śrīvatsavakṣāḥ bhūtvā
> vainateyabhujam ārūḍhaḥ sarvadevanamaskṛtaḥ sarvān
> lokān atītyāsau viṣṇoḥ sāyujyam āpnuyāt |
> anyalokagatāḥ sarve punar āvartinaḥ viṣṇulokagatānāṃ
> nāsty āvṛttiḥ |
>
> When the consecration is finished, he becomes, immediately after his death, a bearer of conch and disk, dark of colour, four-armed, with the Śrīvatsa emblem on his chest, and, seated on Garuḍa's arm, honoured by all the gods, he will pass above the worlds and obtain communion (*sāyujyam*) with Viṣṇu. Those who go to other worlds will all come back, but those who go to Viṣṇu's will not return.

Although the four steps leading to this state of *sāyujyam* in the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā* give every appearance of being post-seventeenth-century southern additions, the overall spiritual trajectory is firmly rooted in ancient Vaikhānasa beliefs. The worship of Nārāyaṇa given in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* notes that Viṣṇu is the fulfilment of all desired objects and that after the required performances the worshipper "goes to the most desirable abode and thrives in Viṣṇu's world."[260] Other parts of the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā* also depend on the *sūtra*, notably

the rituals surrounding images in *praśna* 4 that are taken up in *Kāśyapa* Chapters 59 and 60.[261] These and other comparisons show that the *Kāśyapa* is structurally descended from the *sūtra* and depends on traditions reaching back to the circa fourth century, the time when the *sūtra* was codified. So even though aspects of the foregoing discussion depend on post-Gupta material, the explanation offered is not anachronistic.

That this is the case (i.e., that later developments are derived from Gupta precedents rather than departing from them) is proven by two early inscriptions. The first is the Eran memorial pillar inscription dating to the early sixth century. This recounts how the warrior Goparāja "having fought a very big and famous battle, went to heaven, becoming equal to Indra, the best of the gods."[262] This particular record does not involve a temple, but it shows – like the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta – what was thought to happen after death: righteous people go to heaven and are transformed there into perfect replicas of the gods. The path of the soul is one of continuity and metamorphosis. The second record is the Karamḍaṇḍā inscription. This describes how Pṛthivīṣeṇa, a high-ranking officer at the court of Kumāragupta, established a *liṅga* named Pṛthivīśvara.[263] That was in Gupta year 117 (CE 435–36). Pṛthivīṣeṇa further arranged for the *liṅga*'s proper worship. Now this inscription is engraved directly on the *liṅga*, an epigraphic fact leaving no doubt that Pṛthivīśvara was a Śiva named after its donor. The Valkhā plates hint at this practice in the late fourth century, but there is otherwise no evidence to suggest that the eponymous naming of deities predates the fourth century.[264] From this material, we may thus conclude that the function of images underwent significant changes at this time. While theological speculation about the place of departed souls in a theistic universe no doubt developed before the rise of the Guptas, it was only in the fourth century that cult-objects – actual images and symbols made of permanent materials – began to have an instrumental role in the religious career of individual souls.

None of the surviving inscriptions at Udayagiri deal with the role of images in religious life and none use the word *pratiṣṭhā-* or similar terms. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that images were duly established for worship at the site in the early years of the fifth century. The most obvious evidence for this is the rock-cut panel of Nārāyaṇa (Figure 6). The worshipper kneeling beneath the image, identified in Section 1.4 as Candragupta II, holds a censer in his hand. The purpose of this representation is to show the god receiving an offering of incense from the king as *paramabhāgavata*. As we have seen, incense or *dhūpa* was an essential *pūjā* substance according to the early charters. The significance of the correspondence between the relief and the plates is highlighted by the fact that this is the first depiction of *pūjā* to Viṣṇu in the visual culture of India. This shows not only that the Gupta kings were willing participants in the form of worship recorded in the early charters but that they directly promoted it by

depicting themselves performing *pūjā* in a public and conspicuously monumental fashion.[265]

Aside from direct depictions of *pūjā*, the spatial configuration of the cave-shrines and images at Udayagiri anticipate mature forms of worship and ritual practice. This point is made in a simple fashion by Cave 4. Inside the sanctum there is a single-faced *liṅga* placed on a large moulded plinth.[266] Although this *liṅga* is by no means the oldest one in India, it is the first instance of a *liṅga* installed on a plinth in a square cella. The configuration becomes virtually universal in later temple architecture.

Cave 6 is a more complex harbinger of mature ritual and its supporting architectural space. To make the necessary points, I am compelled to describe the cave and its precinct in some detail as the relevant features have not been discussed in the published literature. The main features are illustrated in the accompanying plan (Figure 26). The cave-proper consists of a cella or *garbhagṛha* with a spouted-plinth for an image. The amount of water used to lustrate the image was evidently considerable: a groove in the floor carried water to a drain that pierces the sanctum wall; outside, a channel directed the water to a pool in front of the cave. The entrance door to the sanctum is elaborately carved and has guardians on each side. Next to the guardians are well-known panels of Viṣṇu and Mahiṣāsuramardinī. Śiva Gaṅgādhara also appears here, much worn by falling water. The configuration of the vestibule area adjacent to these images is especially notable. To one side is a set of goddesses – seated in a rectangular cave-shrine – and to the other a figure of Gaṇeśa – seated in a small niche. The goddesses are damaged and difficult to identify. They are, however, six in number and thus represent the Kṛttikās (i.e., the six stars of the constellation Pleiades and the six Mothers who nourished Skanda as a child). The Kṛttikās are flanked by two male figures, again much damaged, but apparently Vīrabhadra and Kārttikeya.

These details call for attention because Gaṇeśa and the Mothers appear in the same position in later Śiva temples. The arrangement is found in almost every part of India, from the highest reaches of the Himālayas to the plains of Tamil Nadu. The Mothers are normally placed in a row and housed in a rectangular shrine to the right of the sanctum, sometimes in a free-standing temple.[267] Images of Gaṇeśa are equally common and treated in a similar fashion. In the Virūpākṣa temple at Paṭṭaḍakal, for instance, a shrine to Gaṇeśa stands to the left of the sanctum at the entrance to the ambulatory passage. Gaṇeśa is located there because he is regularly invoked as the "Lord of Obstacles" at the beginning of worship.[268] The point is that circumambulation is a form of worship, and the appearance of Gaṇeśa at the entrance automatically invokes his presence as worshippers begin their procession around the Śiva *liṅga*. In temples without an ambulatory passage, Gaṇeśa is simply placed in a niche on the southside of the building – clockwise circumambulation is done in the open air and Gaṇeśa will

be the first image the worshipper encounters. A particularly illustrative case is the Brahmāpurīśvara temple at Puḷḷamaṅgai where Gaṇeśa sits in a shrine-like structure on the south side of the entrance hall.[269]

These morphological comparisons indicate that Cave 6 was originally dedicated to Śiva, a conclusion buttressed by a pilgrim record carved in the ceiling that gives the name Śivāditya.[270] Unfortunately, the cult-image is missing – the present *liṅga* looks like a modern replacement – but we cannot be far wrong if we imagine that the original was similar to the well-known *liṅga* preserved in Cave 4. The dedicatory inscription of Cave 6 – given in Section 1.8 – mentions the donor and his Sanakānika lineage but does not name the deity. However, taking a cue from the Karamḍāṇḍā *liṅga* – originally known as Pṛthivīśvara after its donor Pṛthivīṣeṇa – we can suggest that the Cave 6 *liṅga* was named after one of the Sanakānika princes. If we follow Sircar's reconstruction, that name may have been Soḍhaleśvara. As at Karamḍāṇḍā, this name would have been carved directly on the *liṅga*, as would any record of endowments for regular worship. That provisions for worship were known in the immediate neighbourhood of Udayagiri is show by a contemporary endowment for lamps and the feeding of monks at Sāñchī.[271]

The surfeit of detail given in the foregoing paragraphs may seem diffuse and confusing, but the crux of the matter remains simple and straightforward: the establishment process was a means by which gods were encouraged to take up actual and living residence in their respective images. Aside from the establishment ritual itself, this process included the eponymous naming of individual deities, the provision of religious endowments, the organisation of *pūjā* offerings, and the development of a supporting ritual space (i.e., temple architecture). The special form of incarnation by which gods came to reside in images, termed *ārcāvatāra* in much later schools, was meant to facilitate the personal relationship between devotees and their gods. Modern apologists, embarrassed by idol-worship, have sought to explain the establishment process as a symbolic undertaking, something that ennobled the worshipper so he or she could realise the presence of divine power through the instrument of an image.[272] But this was not the ancient understanding. In Gupta times, the term *pratiṣṭhā* meant "to place a definite power in an object, to endow an object with faculties, etc." – at least for those who did not subscribe to the Mīmāṃsā school of thought, whose advocates, as we shall see in Chapter 3, took considerable exception to images and their worship. Beyond their ambit, the *pratiṣṭhā*-process made the idol a living entity – a real being entitled to receive offerings and legitimately hold the property assigned to it by its patrons.

The establishment of an image was also understood to change its substance in a fundamental way – de facto it was a consecration that changed sculptures from mundane material worked by artists into containers of life and supernormal power. This vivification is generally and frequently referred to as

*prāṇapratiṣṭhā-*, the "establishment of life-breath, vital force, animation." The idea is widely reported but the actual word *prāṇapratiṣṭhā-* does not appear in early inscriptions nor, as we have seen, in the *Bṛhatsaṃhita*.[273] Nevertheless, the transformative rites of establishment that breathed life into inanimate images were current in the fifth century. We assert this on the evidence of the pillar inscription at Bhitrī. This is of exceptional interest because it demonstrates that the proper establishment of images was not simply a popular or sectarian concern but an activity that informed the Vaiṣṇava cult at the heart of the Gupta court.

## 2.11. BHITRĪ: KING, GOD, AND TEMPLE

The importance of the inscription at Bhitrī has long been recognised for the history of the Gupta dynasty in the time of Skandagupta (circa CE 456–67). It is especially important in the context of the present study because it documents the building and endowment of a temple by this Gupta monarch. Bhitrī is located about 35 km northeast of Vārāṇasī (see Figure 1).[274] The site is large and complex, extending over several kilometres. In addition to mounds marking habitation zones, there are a number of temple sites, some of which were excavated from 1968. The temple adjacent to the stone pillar was also cleared at this time, although the inscription had already come to the attention of archaeologists in the nineteenth century.

The pillar on which the inscription is cut has a square base, circular shaft, and lotus capital. The crowning figure, a two-sided image of Garuḍa, was recovered a few metres away. The inscription itself begins with a royal eulogy of the Gupta kings before turning to the achievements of Skandagupta. The actual purpose of the record is given in the closing four verses. These recount how Skandagupta made, established, and endowed an image of Viṣṇu. The relevant portion runs as follows:[275]

s[v]apituḥ kīrtti [– – X X X X X ∪–∪–] ||*]
[X X X[276] X ∪– – X X X X X ∪–∪–] ||| 9*]
[karttavyā*[277]]pratimā kācit pratimāṃ tasya śārṅgiṇaḥ ||*]
s[u]pratītaś cakāremāṃ |kumārasvāmināmikām*[278]| ||| 10*]
iha cainam pratiṣṭhāpya supratiṣṭhitaśāsanaḥ ||*]
grāmam enaṃ sa vidadh[e] pituḥ pu[ṇ]yābhivṛddhaye ||| 11*]
ato bhagavato mūrttir iyaṃ yaś cātra saṃśritaḥ[279] ||*]
ubhayaṃ nirddideśāsau pituḥ puṇyāya puṇyadhīr ||| 12*] iti

[reflecting on?] the *kīrti*[280] of his father |that was like? . . .|
[king Skandagupta thought that?? . . .]
An image of some kind should be made! Firmly resolved,
he made this representation (*pratimā*)
Of Śārṅgin[281] [called Kumārasvāmin];

> And having caused this [god] to be established here,
> he whose orders are well-established
> Gave this village for the increase of his father's merit;
> Then the *mūrti* of the Lord – this one –
> and that [village] situated here,
> Both [i.e., the *mūrti* and village] he, whose thoughts were
> of merit, assigned to the merit of his father.

While there is little doubt about the general direction of events recorded in these verses, the weathering of the stone has led previous editors to propose different readings for some of the words. This has resulted in a degree of uncertainty about the acts that surrounded the establishment of the image. As these problems bear directly on the question of establishment rituals and those who performed them, I felt compelled to examine the record in situ using published hand-copies and estampages. In the course of this research I confronted a number of difficulties in the reading, wording, and syntax. This led me to seek the advice of Hans T. Bakker who had already addressed aspects of the Bhitrī inscription in his work. He tackled the verses with characteristic panache, and his views regarding the purpose and meaning of the record have now been brought to publication.[282] Although the present discussion will cover some of the same ground, little excuse is needed in view of Bhitrī's importance for the history of temple deities. As we shall see in Section 3.6, a correct understanding of the inscription has implications for the interpretation of the archaeology of Bhitrī and the religious culture of the Gupta court.

We begin with verse 9. As will be evident from the preceding text, only a few words are preserved, but the surviving portions show that Skandagupta's memory of his father's glory lay behind the making of the image. Reflections on the glory of deceased kings are not unique to Bhitrī: in the iron-pillar inscription at Mehrauli, for example, the king's fame is declared to remain on the earth even though he has departed to the other world.[283] Similarly, the celebration of the king's fame and its all-pervading nature were important motivations for the creation of the Allahābād stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta.[284] The word used in both cases is *kīrti*. As noted earlier, the primary sense of this term is "fame" or "glory," but it can also describe a temple or other monument because such things are fame-producing works.[285] Accordingly, a double-meaning at Bhitrī can be inferred. From the excavation work carried out at the site, it is at least clear that the temple was built in a number of phases and that it was in existence in the time of Kumāragupta.[286] Skandagupta could therefore have been reflecting on both his father's glory and on his temple.

Turning to verse 10, the first *pāda* seems to be the king's personal statement that an image should be made. The special name of this god can be reconstructed as Kumārasvāmin based on bricks from the temple site that are inscribed

*śrīkumāragupta*[*sya*].[287] As seen in Section 2.10, the naming of gods after specific individuals was well known in Gupta times. Although the practice is implied by early Gupta inscriptions and coin legends – and may have been introduced by Samudragupta in the fourth century – Bhitrī is the first imperial example where an eponymous name for the deity can be reconstructed with reasonable confidence. Bhitrī thus stands at the head of the long tradition of royal temples – buildings constructed by kings of paramount status, dedicated to a god named eponymously after the founding patron, and furnished with endowments by members of the royal clan. The attention Skandagupta gave to the temple and its endowments were a public demonstration of his piety and his close association with Kumāragupta.

Returning to the particulars of the inscription, the reading becomes more problematic with verse 11. Here we have *iha cainam* and *grāmam enaṃ*, literally "and here this" and "this village." Fleet took the first *enam* as the god, but in a note remarked that it could have been the pillar.[288] Bhandarkar thought it referred to the god.[289] As the enclitic pronoun *enam* typically refers to what has gone before, the first *enam* must surely refer to the god, the making of which by Skandagupta has just been recorded in the preceding verse. This god is described as being *iha*, "here", (i.e., at this very place). A similar use of the word *iha* to describe the spot where an inscription was engraved is found at Udayagiri.[290] This emphasises that the village in question was the one that was "right here," that is to say, in close proximity to the pillar and temple. So despite slightly peculiar wording, the meaning of this verse is evident enough: the god was set up "here" beside the pillar and an adjacent village was given as an endowment. The village that was assigned to the deity probably included a wide range of people dedicated to temple service and agricultural labour as described in Section 2.5.[291]

With the first line of verse 12, we come to the most difficult part of the inscription. Fleet read this as: *ato bhagavato mūrttir iyaṃ yaś cātra saṃsthi*(?) *ta*(?)*ḥ*.[292] He translated this: "Accordingly, this image of the Divine One, and (this village) which has been agreed to," but in a footnote remarked that it could mean "and (this column) which stands here." Bhandarkar read the same portion as: *ato bhagavato mūrttir iyaṃ yaś cātra saṃskritaḥ* |= *saṃskṛtaḥ*].[293] This was translated: "Thus this image of the Divine One and (the column) which was consecrated here". In a footnote to this translation Bhandarkar remarked: "This, of course, refers to the place where the column is set up and where the purificatory ceremony took place". He does not venture to tell us what kind of purificatory ceremony this might have been. D. C. Sircar preferred to follow Fleet in his reading and opined that the lines referred to the installation of the image and gift of the village; *saṃsthitaḥ*, "settled," being what happened to the village.[294]

The core of the problem is the phrase *yaś cātra saṃskṛtaḥ* or *saṃsthitaḥ*. Before determining what this might mean and describe, we are obliged to

determine which reading is correct. Going back to Cunningham's hand-copy, and taking this with Fleet's estampage, we can readily see that the first portion up to *yaś cātra* presents little difficulty.[295] The problems start only with *sa*[*ṃ*]. At this point, Cunningham could not see a letter and gave only *-śritaḥ*. In Fleet's estampage, however, the *sa* is unambiguous. A study of the inscription in situ revealed that there is an *anusvāra* over the letter, so we can read *saṃ* at this point with certainty. The next letter in Fleet's estampage is a ligature that looks like *skri*. This no doubt prompted Bhandarkar et al. to suggest *sa*[*ṃ*]*skritaḥ*. The inscription is worn at this point, but taking it with the estampage and hand-copy, Fleet's proposal *saṃsthi*(?)*ta*(?)*ḥ* does not seem possible no matter how hard we try. The problem, of course, is that *saṃskritaḥ* (corrected to *saṃskṛtaḥ*) does not make proper sense. Bhandarkar tried to get around this by saying that the pillar was subject to a process of *saṃskṛta-* (i.e., that it was completed or consecrated in some way). Any troubles were swept away by inventing a "purificatory ceremony." The difference is far from trivial if we are concerned, as indeed we are, with ritual acts and those who may have performed them.

The precariousness of Bhandarkar's proposal is shown by the Kahāum pillar inscription. This provides a useful comparison because it comes from the same general region, describes analogous activities, and belongs to the time of Skandagupta. More especially, the similarities and differences help us anticipate what might be communicated in a pillar inscription and thus what the Bhitrī inscription might have actually said. In both inscriptions, the closing lines give a factual account of the donor and his activities. Bhitrī we have given above; the Kahāum text runs as follows.[296]

> puṇyaskandhaṃ sa cakkre jagad idam akhilaṃ saṃsarad vīkṣya
> bhīto śreyorttthaṃ bhūtabhūtyai pathi niyamavatām arhatām
> ādikarttṝn ||*]
> pañcendrāṃ sthāpayitvā dharaṇidharamayān sannikhātas
> tato [*]yam śailastambhaḥ sucārur girivaraśikharāgropamaḥ
> kīrttikarttā |||*].
>
> Looking on this whole transient world and becoming frightened, he [i.e., Madra] made a heap of merit, having established, for the sake of well-being and the good of living beings, five Lords made of mountain stone, the originators on the path of restrained Arhats. Thereafter this stone pillar, a maker of *kīrti* lovely like a peak of the Himālayas, was planted [by him].

Two things are recorded here: firstly, the donor, an individual named Madra, made merit for himself by establishing five Tīrthaṃkara images; secondly, he set up "this stone pillar" as a way of augmenting his fame.[297] The order of events and vocabulary parallel what we find at Bhitrī. The verb used for the establishment of the images is the causative of √*sthā*, "to cause to be established."

This designates, as we saw earlier, the stable establishment of anything, from an individual in a social or political position to a sacred image on a plinth. At Bhitrī and Kahāum, the establishment of images generated merit for the donors. What they preferred to do with this merit differed: Madra piled up a "heap of merit" for his own benefit; Skandagupta transferred the merit to his father. Skandagupta also transferred the merit of a village-grant to his father, an added complexity not found at Kahāum. The next step for Madra involved embedding the pillar in the earth. This is explicitly mentioned because the pillar functioned as a "creator of fame" (*kīrtikartṛ*). In other words, Madra was seeking to increase his worldly reputation by setting up the pillar. Skandagupta was equally concerned with fame but, unlike Madra, had wider concerns as a king. Specifically, he perceived his fame as resting on the reestablishment of a shaky lineage (*pracalitaṃ vaṃśaṃ pratiṣṭhāpya*). Accordingly, his rule was "well-established" (*supratiṣṭhitaśāsanaḥ*) and his increasing splendour was publicly celebrated in song.[298] Skandagupta's fame, in other words, did not rest solely on the establishment of a pillar or some other monument but on his personal achievements as a ruler and the enduring reputation of his family.

These distinctions may seem like quibbles but they are important for one basic reason: if a patron's socio-political ambitions were closely tied to the establishment of a monument, then this would be announced in a lucid fashion.[299] This allows us to draw a key conclusion regarding the likely reading of the Bhitrī inscription, namely, if Skandagupta's intention had been to mention the pillar and its establishment, then this would have been stated plain and simple. It would not have been recorded cryptically and parenthetically using atypical vocabulary. On these grounds, the reading *saṃskṛtaḥ* – and Bhandarkar's understanding of this as qualifying the pillar – can be regarded as unsafe.

Given that the reading *saṃskṛtaḥ* has to be set aside, I felt compelled to study this word with care when visiting the site. This combined with Cunningham's hand-copy and Fleet's estampage yielded the reading *saṃśritaḥ*, "attached to, assigned to, dwelling in, situated in," and so on. This reading is supported by the ligature *śrī* in iron-pillar inscription at Mehrauli. The *śri* at Bhitrī is more cursive, but the shape otherwise is close. Based on this, the reading *saṃśritaḥ*, if not an absolute certainty, is probably the best we can hope to recover. The advantage, anyway, is that the meaning is close to Fleet's *saṃsthitaḥ*, "residing at, resting in" and even suits the case more precisely. Having come this far, we can now ask what this describes. It cannot be the image (*mūrti*, *pratimā*) because these words are feminine and our participle is masculine. So it has to be the pillar or the village. As we have just disqualified the pillar, the phrase *yaś cātra saṃśritaḥ* must qualify *grāma*. With this, the logic of verse 12 becomes practically self-evident. The village in question is "that which is situated here," and

Skandagupta assigned this village to the god and the merit of his father. One final point on the word *iyaṃ*. Grammatically this should go with *mūrti* and translators so far have been content with the gloss "this image". This certainly works, but Hans Bakker has observed that the word *iyaṃ* falls after the caesura, so ". . . this must mean that *pāda* 12b actually sums up the two things referred to by *ubhayam* in 12c."[300] His translation of verse 12 accordingly runs as follows: "Therefore, the image of the God, this one (here), and (the community) that is living here, that one (i.e., Skandagupta) assigned to the merit of (his) father, for he is intent on merit."

With the translation and extended commentary given here, the ritual steps taken at Bhitrī come into sharp focus. To summarise: (1) Skandagupta made the image of Śārṅgin; (2) he had this image established; (3) he granted a village-community as an endowment; (4) he assigned the merit of making the image and giving the village to his father. This sequence of actions and their cumulative impact are of considerable interest from the religious and cultural perspective. The first step involved the making of the sculpture. Once this was done, the sculpture was "established." The importance of this event is revealed by the vocabulary: this tells us that while the king crafted a representation or replica (*pratimā*), the establishment procedure changed this into a living image (*mūrti*).[301] The account is no doubt condensed, but the establishment ritual – effectively a consecration as we have seen in the previous section – transformed the *pratimā* – a mere reflection – into the actual body of god – the *mūrti*. This metamorphosis stands at the very heart of the present book. Stone idols like those described in the Bhitrī inscription had to be vivified if they were to become sentient beings with a right to the tangible goods offered to them. The consecration was no doubt a religious matter, but once this happened the legal status of the god changed. Made manifest and firmly fixed in their temple homes, the gods became living parts of everyday life, juridic personalities entitled to garlands, incense, lamps, perfume, hymns of praise, and – lest we forget – land and revenue. The compelling splendour of the living image is beautifully captured in the Bilsaḍ inscription of Kumāragupta: the divine Svāmi Mahāsena has a wondrous *mūrti*, formed from the accumulated lustre of the three worlds (*trailokyatejassaṃbhārasaṃbhūtādbhutamūrtti*). He is, furthermore, the god Brahmaṇya, and the construction of his residence is a truly magnificent work.[302] Pundit Prannath Saraswati summarised the whole matter in an precise fashion over a century ago: "By this process of vivification the image from its previous status as an inanimate object, a simple piece of clay, stone or metal, acquires the status of a judicial personage, capable of holding property. As observed by Mr. Justice Scott in his judgement in the Mandvi Temple Case, Thakersey Dewraj v. Hurbhum Nursey, 'the deity of the temple is considered in Hindu Law as a sacred entity or ideal personality possessing proprietary rights'."[303]

## 2.12. RĀJYATANTRA: PERMANENCE, AUTHORITY, MOTIVATION, AND MEANS

Skandagupta, like all the patrons encountered in these pages, wanted his temple to last as a monument and religious institution. The long-term viability of his temple – as with all temples – rested on its permanence and ongoing authority as a socio-economic entity. Permanence was achieved through the introduction of durable materials: land-grants were written on sheets of copper, dedicatory inscriptions were engraved on pillars or slabs, sacred images were carved in stone or cast in metal. The frequent use of the word "stone" to describe images and temples shows that physical permanence was an important preoccupation in the fifth century.[304] At Udayagiri, a place that witnessed the naissance of temple religion, permanence was affirmed by the conflation of cave and temple: nothing could be more permanent and unshakable than a shrine excavated into a mountain and an image carved from the living rock. Permanence was otherwise buttressed by the insistence that grants were irrevocable and meant to last as long as the sun, moon, and stars.

Yet the survival of temples rested on rather more than long-lasting materials and a few bold assertions. For temples to become root institutions in society – as they had by the end of the fifth century -- the gods established in them had to be vested with enduring authority. In practical terms, this meant that the individuals who founded temples and provided them with endowments had to convince the people around them that temples genuinely mattered: the gods had to be seen as powerful beings who controlled the world, granted a range of blessings, and guaranteed felicity in the afterlife. We have cited several inscriptions that show how kings, priests, and merchants worked together in concert to achieve this end. But a king, however influential, and a priest, however charismatic, and a merchant, however rich, were not enough to guarantee the longevity of a temple. The vibrancy of a cult in the longer term – its hold over the hearts of devotees and its grip on the resources from granted lands – rested on succeeding generations acceding to the authority of the god and the priests who managed that god's religious service. How this was achieved is a crucial historical and religious question.

The favoured mechanism for guaranteeing the life of a temple and its cult was to make appeals to an authority that transcended the particular circumstances of the ruler, temple priest, and economic patron, to make appeals, in short, to the authority of the Veda. This theological rationale needs little introduction to students of Indian thought: because the Veda is deemed timeless, eternal, and perennially valid, anything that depends on the Veda or is derived from the Veda, is necessarily timeless, eternal, and perennially valid.[305] Strategies of validation thus involved showing that particular undertakings were essentially

"Vedic" – especially undertakings that might be called into question because they appeared to depart from the Veda. We have already noted how *pūjā*-offerings were understood in terms of the Veda and referred to Vedic tradition: the use of Vedic forms – *bali, caru,* and *sattra* – demonstrated that this type of worship was faithful to received tradition. Similarly, the use of Vedic invocations to accompany the offering of flowers, incense, and lamps – as we find in *Viṣṇusmṛti* 65: 3–14 – showed that these offerings "unpacked" meanings inherent in the *mantra*-texts. Land-grants were, by a circuitous route, subject to the same hermeneutic. The verses that appear at the end of the copper-plate charters – examples were cited at the beginning of this chapter – are frequently ascribed to Vyāsa, the great sage whose ostensible output makes him the most prolific writer in the history of Sanskrit literature. Aside from arranging the four Vedas in their present form, he is credited with the composition of the *Mahābhārata*.[306] Now the *Mahābhārata* is described as ancient lore or *itihāsa* – literally "so-it-was." It is also termed "the fifth Veda." This showed – through a single stroke of classification – that the *Mahābhārata* participated in and affirmed the Veda and its ancillaries.[307]

For the historical sceptic, of course, the *Mahābhārata* has no manifest relationship to the Veda and should, as a consequence, have no special authority as far as the Veda is concerned. The Veda is beginningless and authorless: it is an anthology of revelatory hymns that were originally "seen" by the ancient seers and subsequently transmitted through oral recitation. For this reason, the hymns are termed *śruti* – that which is heard.[308] The epic is not a work of this type. Neither is it *smṛti* – traditional "recollections" that are dependent on the Veda and deal with *dharma* and related acts, ritual or otherwise. As J. A. B. van Buitenen has elegantly observed, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Mahābhārata* in which it is embedded, has authority for all the wrong reasons: it has a person as its author, it is a product of time, and it has no regard for *śruti*.[309] But Indian thinkers were not interested in highlighting divergence, novelty, and innovation. Their concern was to show convergence, fidelity, and congruity: texts were incorporated into the Vedic tradition by showing that they conformed to *śruti* and *smṛti*. This was the only way they could be valid and meaningful. At the end of the day, this was not a difficult task: the Vedas themselves are well-nigh incomprehensible and were heard, as we learn from Bhāskara's commentaries, by carefully monitored elites.[310] Regardless of what we might think as modern commentators, the a priori working assumption was the final authority of the Veda: it is true, unimpeachable, unshakable, and absolute. So verses from the *Mahābhārata* – the fifth Veda – are nothing less than Vedic injunction.

The Gunaighar copper-plates of Vainyagupta show that this way of thinking about the Vedic tradition was prevalent in the late fifth century. In addition to quoting verses of Vyāsa – to which we will shortly turn – the charter

offers a statement regarding the future management of land granted by the crown:[311]

> api ca khalu śrutismṛtītihāsavihitāṃ
> puṇyabhūmidānaśrutim aihikāmuttrikaphalaviśeṣe smṛto[312]
> bhāvataḥ samupagamya svatas tu pīḍām apy ūrikṛtya
> pāttrebhyo bhūmiṃ [. . .] dviṣadbhir asmad
> vacanagauravāt svayaśodharmmāvāptaye caite pāṭakā
> asmin bi(vi)hāre śaśvatkālam abhya[nupālayitavyāḥ*(?)||*]
>
> And indeed having duly considered the sacred teaching with regard to the meritorious donation of land set out in *śruti*, *smṛti* and *itihāsa*, [insofar as] the specific worldly and post-mortem rewards have been traditionally taught, but also accepting even [financial] losses that might accrue [to them] personally, enemy [kings who are disposed to grant] land to worthy recipients should maintain these lands in (the hands of) this monastery for all time, [both] out of a respect for my declaration and in order to assure theirown fame and religious virtue.

Vainyagupta presents this as his own declaration (*asmadvacana*), a circumstance that perhaps explains its atypical forms, unusual words, and difficult syntax. Despite these problems (as well as lacunae and questionable readings on the part of the editors) the purport is clear enough: in the first place, Vainyagupta invokes *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *itihāsa*. Notable by its absence in this list is *Purāṇa*, an omission that indicates these scriptures were not considered authoritative as far as land grants were concerned. Vainyagupta then addresses enemy kings who might disturb his grant to the *vihāra* (allies and underlings are tacitly assumed to need no instruction in the matter). These kings are alerted firstly to *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *itihāsa* regarding the gift of land and the benefits that accrue from this activity. Thus inspired to make land-grants, they are urged not to confiscate the land granted by Vainyagupta. Indeed, they should honour Vainyagupta's proclamation and always protect the assigned lands, even if this means suffering pecuniary difficulties. Following this path will bring fame and merit.

Vainyagupta's declaration reflects the sentiments of a verse that appears with uncounted frequency in inscriptions: *bahubhir vasudhā bhuktā rājabhis sagarādibhiḥ; yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā phalam*, "The earth has been enjoyed by many kings, commencing with Sagara; whosoever possesses the earth, to him belongs the reward." The Sagara mentioned here was a king of high antiquity who let loose a sacrificial horse on an annual basis and claimed all the land on which it trod.[313] So his territory, like that of every *cakravartin* who has performed the horse sacrifice, embraced the whole world. This control of the earth is qualified by the second part of the verse. The meaning here is as follows: "whosoever possesses the earth at any given point in time, to that king belongs the reward of grants previously made." The reward included the king's

customary share of religious merit, typically one-sixth.[314] This was the rate because, according to the *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, the king was entitled to one-sixth of the produce of the land in return for his protection of the people and their property.[315] In other words, the king received one-sixth of the merit of a gift because this was the normal level of the king's entitlement.

If a king assumed that his theoretical possession of the whole earth gave him license to ride rough shod over commitments made by others in the past, the charters outline the consequences that will befall those who overturn grants or collude with those having this intention. We quoted several examples in Section 2.2. In Vainyagupta's grant the verses read thus:

anupālanam prati ca bhagavatā parāśarātmajena
vedavyāsena vyāsena gītāḥ ślokā bhavanti [||*]
ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svargge modati bhūmidaḥ [|*]
ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva na[ra*]ke vaset [||*] 1
svadattāṃ paradattām vā yo hareta [vasu]ndharāṃ [|*]
[sa]viṣṭhāyāṃ kṛmir bhūtvā pitṛbhis saha pacyate [||*] 2
pūrvvadattāṃ dvijātibhyo yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira [|*]
mahīṃ mahīmatāṃ śreṣṭha dānāt śreyonupālaṃ[316][||*] 3

Regarding the (future) protection (of the grant) there are verses sung by the reverend Vyāsa, the compiler of the Vedas and the son of Parāśara:

The giver of land rejoices in heaven for sixty thousand years (but) he who confiscates (granted land) and he who assents (to such action) live in hell for that period!

He who takes away land given by himself or by others rots along with his forefathers becoming a worm in ordure!

O Yudhiṣṭhira, best of kings, carefully protect the land granted to brāhmaṇas by former (kings), for protection is better than the gift itself!

The information in Vainyagupta's plate is in exact conformity with the rules laid down in *Viṣṇusmṛti* (3: 81–83) regarding royal grants of land. The relevant portion is as follows: [317]

brāhmaṇebhyaś ca bhuvaṃ pratipādayet || 81
yeṣām ca pratipādayet teṣāṃ svavaṃśyān bhuvaḥ parimāṇaṃ
dānacchedopavarṇanaṃ ca paṭe tāmrapaṭṭe vā likhitaṃ svamudrāṅkitaṃ
cāgāminṛpativijñāpanārthaṃ dadyāt || 82
paradattāṃ ca bhuvaṃ nāpaharet || 83

Let him [the king] bestow landed property upon brāhmaṇas.

To those upon whom he has bestowed (land) he must give a document, destined for the information of a future ruler, which must be written upon a piece of cloth, or a copper-plate, and must contain the names of (three) immediate ancestors, a declaration of the extent of the land, and a

description (of what results) from disrupting the donation, and should be signed with his own seal.

Let him not appropriate to himself landed property bestowed (upon brāhmaṇas) by other (rulers).

A number of general principles about land-tenure in Gupta times emerge from these prescriptions and the foregoing discussion as a whole. These can be summarised as follows:

- The "whole earth" is possessed by a king who is politically successful and who performs the religious rites that make him a universal sovereign or *cakravartin*. This gives him absolute title to the land, at least in theory, and puts him in a position to make grants of land, an activity he is encouraged to undertake.
- The merit of making a grant is indestructible and is transferred from one king to the next. The current ruler, whoever he might be, enjoys the spiritual benefit of earlier grants – and other entitlements from the relevant estates unless these too have been given away as part of the grant.
- As a consequence of the above, kings have no grounds for disturbing earlier grants or for confiscating land already given. So while kings hold title to all land in principle thanks to Sagara's precedent, they are obliged to respect land-grants made by their predecessors, even those who are or were politically hostile to them.
- The granting of land involves unseen outcomes: it brings merit and fame in this world and long residence in heaven after death. Those who reverse land-grants or assent to such actions will end up in hell.

The verses from the *Mahābhārata* that appear at the end of each charter were included to buttress the rights of donees. They reminded kings of the consequences – good and bad – that come with granting land. Now because copper-plates were issued to donees, the intended "readers" of the epic verses could only have been those who might challenge the validity of the grant or attempt to seize the donee's assets. Vainyagupta's proclamation, and the passages in the *Viṣṇusmṛti* just cited, show that the epic verses were directed to other kings. Further "readers" would have included the king's agents who are consistently ordered to stay off the land belonging to priests and temples.[318] An important corollary to be deduced from the epic verses is that juridic recipients – individual people and their analogues enshrined in temples – held effective title, grants being made to them in perpetuity for all practical purposes.

That recipients were intended to hold land undisturbed is highlighted by the frequent statement that benefactions were to be enjoyed by the recipient, his son and grandson: *putrapautrānvayopabhojyau pratipāditau*.[319] These words were not included as an idle pleasantry. Their use represented a legal commitment and meant that a freehold was being created and guaranteed by the

state. If a family enjoyed land for several generations, it would be regarded as their permanent property according to the following adage:

> adbhir dattaṃ tribhir bhuktaṃ sadbhis ca paripālitam |
> etāni na nivartante pūrvarājakṛtāni ca ||

This stanza enjoyed currency in the Gupta age and shows that land could not be confiscated if it was granted by an earlier king and had been enjoyed by a family for three generations.[320] This reflects the position of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* that is unequivocal on the question of land tenure:[321]

> sāgamena tu bhogena bhuktaṃ samyag yadā tu yat|
> āhartā labhate tatra nāpahārthaṃ tu tat kvacit || 186
> pitrā bhuktaṃ tu yad dravyaṃ bhuktyācāreṇa dharmataḥ|
> tasmin prete na vācyo 'sau bhuktyā prāptaṃ hi tasya tat || 187
> tribhir eva tu yā bhuktā puruṣair bhūr yathāvidhi|
> lekhyābhāve 'pi tāṃ tatra caturthaḥ samavāpnuyāt || 188
>
> What has been possessed in order and with legitimate title (such as purchase, donation, and the like) the possessor may keep; it can never be taken from him.
>
> Where (land or other) property has been held in legitimate possession by the father, the son's right to it, after his own death, cannot be contested; for it has become his own by force of possession.
>
> If possession has been held of an estate by three (successive) generations in due course, the fourth in descent shall inherit it as his property even without written title.

The date and geographical horizon of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* make it especially relevant to the question of land-grants in the Gupta period. In the opinion of Julius Jolly, the first editor and translator of the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, the text rested on an old work but was recast by ardent followers of the Vaiṣṇava *dharma* in the fourth or fifth century.[322] Although this may be too early a date for the reworking, the opening chapters of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* are manifestly part of its later ingredients. They include the raising of the earth by Varāha and a hymn in his praise by Pṛthivī (*VSm* 1: 1–61), the description of an ideal society ordered according to caste (i.e., brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra [*VSm* 2: 1–17]), and an outline of the king's duties, a leading aspect of which is the protection of the *varṇa*-system (*VSm* 3: 1–98). This matter has been introduced to add theological depth to the text and to enhance its socio-political scope. Like the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, to which it is closely related, the *Viṣṇusmṛti* claims wide authority for its laws and their application by dealing with matters beyond the immediate compass of the Vedic schools.

The place where the *Viṣṇusmṛti* took its present form – and asserted its wider influence on religion and society – is not explicitly stated in the work, as we

would expect. However, the list of *tīrtha*-s in *VSm* 85: 3–52 exhibits some revealing points of emphasis. Heading the list are four key sites: (1) Puṣkara in Rājasthān, (2) Prayāga at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, (3) Gayā in Bihar, (3) Amarakaṇṭaka in the Vindhyas, and (4) the Varāha mountain, possibly Bārāmūla in Kashmir.[323] These places represent the horizon of the text's geographical knowledge and – we may assume – the historical scope of the Kāṭhakas, the school responsible for the work (see Table 2 for the school and text relationships). Within this area, the *Viṣṇusmṛti* shows special familiarity with locations in Rājasthān in addition to Puṣkara, a fact that suggests the Kāṭhakas were settled there in considerable numbers. In the list of rivers, the Narmadā figures as an unusual first, superseding the Gaṅgā and Yamunā. We also find the Śoṇa (modern Son) and Vetravatī (modern Betwā), rivers in central India that are not normally given in lists of this kind. With them is a holy place called Viṣṇupada. In his commentary *Vaijayantī*, Nandapaṇḍita explains this as the centre of Gayā, following the understanding prevalent in the seventeenth century when he wrote.[324] This does not seem to be the text's intention. Gayā appears at the beginning of the *tīrtha* list, while Viṣṇupada is clustered with sites and rivers in the Vindhyas and northern Deccan. This makes it likely that Viṣṇupada refers to Udayagiri because this was one of the site's eponyms in Gupta times, as noted in Section 1.12.

These geographical observations tell us something about the *Viṣṇusmṛti*. Those who compiled the text were certainly leading scholars in the Kāṭhaka tradition. Their aim would have been to produce a work that would have been accepted by all Kāṭhaka pundits and used by them as a prescriptive guide in and beyond their school. In creating such a text, the scholars involved would have assembled at a convenient spot – let's assume Puṣkara for the sake of argument. When compiling the list of *tīrtha*-s, they would have been compelled to consider the realities of their time and school in a pragmatic way, the special emphasis on Rājasthān, Mālwa, and the northern Deccan suggesting that many Kāṭhakas, if not the leading redactors of the work, hailed from these areas.[325] The apparent mention of Udayagiri under the name Viṣṇupada and the dedication of the opening chapter of the *smṛti* to Varāha – and the linking of this incarnation with the order of society and the duties of the king in subsequent chapters – also points to an awareness of central India among the text's authors.

This proposal is supported by a copper-plate of *mahārāja* Hastin that records his establishment of an estate (*agrahāra*) for a large number of brāhmaṇas. Most were followers of the *White Yajurveda*, but one individual – a man named Kumāradeva of the Vāsula *gotra* – was a Kāṭhaka.[326] This proves that the school to which the *Viṣṇusmṛti* belonged was settled in the Vindhyan kingdom of the Parivrājakas. Of additional note is the tradition that the *Kaṭhakasaṃhitā* was complied by Kaṭha, a disciple of Vaiśampāyana.[327] The latter was a disciple of Vyāsa, the sage who figures as the author of the imprecations in the central

Indian charters. Of course, Vyāsa was quoted widely in epigraphs, so this epic *parampara* alone is not enough to tie the Kāṭhakas to central India. What is region-specific is the Parivrājaka and Uccakalpa endorsement of the *varṇa*-system, a subject of extended concern in the *Viṣṇusmṛti*.[328]

The possibility that a version of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* may have circulated in a regional court under the Gupta kings raises some general questions about the interpretation of textual, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence. This is an important methodological issue, best addressed at this stage, as our position on the matter governs the relative weight we give to particular data and so shapes our understanding of the Gupta period as a whole. The key question is whether subordinate kings were effectively independent. If they were, are we to judge their activities and cultural products as matters of strictly regional concern? Alternately, if subordinate kings were indeed subordinate, are their activities to be seen as a useful gauge of the ideology and culture of the imperial court and thus of India as a whole during the fifth century? Our interpretation favours the second option, answering the second question in the affirmative. While the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas no doubt pursued policies unique to their immediate region and circumstances – we should not expect otherwise – the evidence suggests that they replicated and reinforced the norms of their overlords. In support of this view, I would recall several points raised earlier in this book. The Valkhā plates, discussed in Section 1.11, show that subordinate rulers conformed to court protocol and religious ideology – *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa mediated of the emperor's feet and describes himself as a devotee of Nārāyaṇa. This kind of supplication and conformity was openly illustrated at Udayagiri by the Varāha panel and the votive figure at its base. As noted in Chapter 1, it can be read in a number of ways, principally as the Gupta emperor and the local Sanakānika king. Subordinates mimicked the emperor in this way because he was the *paramabhāgavata* – the leader of the Vaiṣṇava community to which subordinates belonged. This is confirmed by inscriptions that show how local kings followed the style and ideological lead of the Guptas. In this light, then, the actions of the Parivrājaka and Uccakalpa rulers were not simply matters of parochial interest but indicative of broader trends. Even though there is an obvious need to avoid making a parody of the period by obliterating all variation, there can be no question that when it came to the land and its management, the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas were participants in a truly pan-India system.[329]

The imprecations given in the copper-plate inscriptions, and the organisation of data in the charters otherwise, are the clearest indication that land tenure across much of India was informed by shared ideas and common practices. It is especially remarkable that the wording of the imprecations hardly varies from northern Bengal to the central Deccan – an area conforming to the territory controlled by the Guptas, Vākāṭakas, and their tributaries. It is equally remarkable that since Fleet first published the imprecations more than a century

ago, commentators have not bothered to explore the reason why these verses were used or explained what they tell us about the land-system in the Gupta period.[330] Most scholars – and editors of inscriptions discovered since Fleet's time – have ignored the imprecatory verses, noting them in passing as if they were little more than idle threats and an embarrassing relic of *pensée sauvage*. But the consistent use of the verses, and the reference to them in a legal work like the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, shows that their inclusion was central to the business of granting land and issuing charters. The purport of the verses additionally shows they were included to bolster the notion of property beyond the immediate power of the king and his agents.

Even though the brāhmaṇas who received land had a vested interest in grants and so endorsed the system in their literature, and the main legal tension seems to have been the establishment of property rights over and above the potentially capricious power of individual kings. The whole process was authored, nonetheless, by kings and those in their service. Administrative arrangements varied from grant to grant, but everyone involved – kings, subordinates, officers, and bureaucrats – were warned against meddling. They, in their turn, warned those to come that it was imprudent to interfere with established holdings. We have cited the declaration of Vainyagupta as a good indicator of these concerns, but many charters, including those of the Parivrājakas, Uccakalpas, and Vākāṭakas, have words to the same effect.[331] The implications of this information are clear and important: each king was supposed to make grants of land, yet each king was required to respect grants made in the past. With land increasingly encumbered in this way – and the possibility of confiscation more or less excluded – the only option was to push into the hinterland. In other words, the whole system was inherently expansionist.

This system was not exactly being invented as the plates of the Gupta period were being issued, but it was enjoying unprecedented application and support. The exact nature of land-tenure within the system has been a subject of much study and debate. Scholarly controversies have been compounded by the complexity of the epigraphic and literary evidence, not to mention the potential for variation from region to region and the development of practice over time. Moreover, the historiography has been distorted by colonial presuppositions on the part of earlier writers and ideologically charged forms of analysis on the part of historians in post-independence India. Taking a broad swipe at ideologically driven interpretations and narrow datasets, D. C. Sircar opened his *Political and Administrative Systems of Ancient and Medieval India* with the following comment: "Some scholars have expressed their views on the early Indian land system, though their writings appear to be based on a rather inadequate study of the epigraphical material. This is easily explained by the fact that the inscriptions in the various Indian languages are too many and their interpretation is difficult in many cases."[332]

The methodological recommendation that flows from Sircar's caveat is it is unwise to argue for static and undifferentiated generalisations when it comes to the question of land-tenure. For the Gupta period, the best model that addresses these concerns is that proposed by Hans T. Bakker in 1992.[333] This merits adoption because it is uniquely rooted in the religious and geographical setting of the land-grants themselves. As Bakker has noted, the Vākāṭakas appear to have been guided in matters of governance by the directives given in *Arthaśāstra* 13: 5: 3–18. This advocates that a king should firstly adopt the customs, dress, and language of the region he rules, paying due respect to festive gatherings, hermitages, and local deities (*deśadaivata*). He should then make grants of land, money, and exemptions to men of learning and piety. He is advised to displace thieves and barbarians (*mleccha*), settling in their place people of his own country or those inclined to disfavour his enemies.

The ways in which this policy was enacted can be understood from the distribution of Vākāṭaka charters – a meaningful exercise because a significant number have survived. Distribution patterns prove, firstly, that the great majority of donated estates were in outlying districts and, secondly, that the Vākāṭaka kings strove "to extend their sphere of influence by means of brahmanical colonisation."[334] Grants from other regions, especially those studied in this chapter, show this to be a cogent interpretation. They refer to the assigned lands as unfurrowed waste (*aprahatakhilakṣetra*) not yielding anything (*apradā*).[335] In one case, the area covered by the grant is described as being "here in the forest" (*atrāraṇye*), that is, away from inhabited zones already under active cultivation. The marginal character of the land being colonised is highlighted with special clarity in the Dāmodarpur plate of Kumāragupta. This speaks of the creation of an estate in a waterless area (*airāvata*) that was devoid of cattle (*ago*).[336]

Taken with Bakker's understanding of the geographical distribution of Vākāṭaka grants, these descriptions mean that estates were being created in areas that had potential for agricultural improvement but which, up to the fifth century, had been left undeveloped. What new crops, farming techniques, and pastoral regimes were introduced to facilitate reclamation is a specialist problem we leave to paleo-botanists. The central issue for the historian of social and religious institutions is that the new estates – whether *agrahāra* or *devāgrahāra* – were a means by which the state could insinuate its authority into the hinterland and establish there an infrastructure that would develop the economy and, in due course, increase the revenues of the treasury. A crucial part of this infrastructure was the encouragement of a stable and complex social structure (i.e., the *varṇa*-system).

We have already mentioned some of the evidence showing how the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas were advocates of the *varṇa*-system. That this advocacy extended to actual application is shown by the Uchahara copper-plates. These record how *mahārāja* Jayanātha divided the village of

Kalabhikuṇḍaka into sixty shares and donated these to twenty-five different people. The donees are individually named and their caste affiliation listed: brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, or śūdra.[337] The constitution of Kalabhikuṇḍaka prior to these arrangements is told by the king's address to the residents of the village. Like other grants from the region, the royal order is directed to "the householders, beginning with brāhmaṇas, and all other artisans."[338] It is important to note – indeed crucial – that kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras never figure in these addresses. This demonstrates that rural society in the Vindhyan hinterland was not stratified according to the *varṇa*-system before the fifth century or, at the very least, that the court perceived it as consisting only of brāhmaṇas, householders, and miscellaneous artisans.[339] We may thus read Jayanātha's grant as an intrusive exercise in social engineering, a deliberate attempt to transform Kalabhikuṇḍaka into a "model village" where social distinctions were carefully and neatly marked according to ideology of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* and related works.

Social stratification of this kind was needed because it supplied the specialist workforce that ran the newly-created estates. The śūdras, according to the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, were responsible for "all branches of art," a prescription that shows they were not menial workers but craftsmen who built and decorated the buildings that marked the introduction of temple-based theism and the new socio-economic order.[340] The *varṇa*-system also supplied vaiśyas. In the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, they are described as pastoral, agrarian, and financial experts, responsible for "tillage, protecting cows, trade, lending money on interest and keeping a wife."[341] Such people were needed to manage farms, quantify economic surpluses, and translate them into a form that could be remitted to the treasury. Brāhmaṇas functioned as the overseers of these arrangements, and kṣatriyas as their special protectors. Areas outside the system were viewed as barbarian: "those countries are called *mleccha* where the system of the four *varṇa*-s does not exist" – even drinking the water in such places turns one into a savage.[342]

Aside from the Uchahara charter of *mahārāja* Jayanātha, the copper-plates of Śarvanātha dated Gupta year 193 give an indication of the ways in which barbarian land could be transformed into a civilised – in fact we may say Sanskritised – estate. As we have seen already in our discussion of the public nature of the early temple-cult, this particular charter describes how administrative and priestly elites were imposed on a pre-existing village.[343] The temple was an important element in the programme. Purpose-built for the grant, it became a tangible and permanent manifestation of the *devagṛahāra* and, at one remove, the king who sanctioned its creation. Estates of the *agṛahāra* type involved brāhmaṇas alone. These brāhmaṇas attracted patronage on account of their Vedic knowledge and the rites they were supposed to perform, principally the *pañcamahāyajña*. Although this "cultural packet" had different constituents – it lacked a temple and the special forms of worship that went with it – we have

already seen that brāhmaṇas functioned as analogues of temple deities and that *pūjā* and *smārta* ritual were closely related in Gupta times. The *agrahāra*-holders thus served the same colonising role as their temple-based compatriots. The brāhmaṇas installed by kings on these estates had, in Bakker's words, "an enormous influence on the spread of the ideology on which the prestige of these kings was based. Often they may have been the main upholders of law and order and in this way may have proved themselves indispensable, though ultimately merely instrumental to their political masters."[344]

The degree to which brāhmaṇas were "merely instrumental to their political masters" brings us to the workings of the revenue system and the degree to which kings delegated tax-collecting and other forms of authority to local landlords. How estates were managed in Gupta times is elucidated by the Parivrājaka and Uccakalpa plates. These frequently include an order from the local king telling the villagers that they must obey the donee and pay their taxes to him.[345] Wording of this kind, found in many charters, was understood by Sircar to mean that "the king relegated to the donee landlords what he himself expected and realised from the villagers." Sircar's assumption was that the donees had no further obligations and that the land-granting process was one of general if not wholesale decentralisation.[346] Despite many interpretive differences, this view is shared by historians who have explained the history of later India as governed by a process of feudalisation.[347]

This understanding of land-tenure, revenue, and authority cannot be sustained. Although there is no doubt that kings engaged in revenue farming, we cannot conclude on this basis that the practice eroded the power of the king and his court. In the first place, the charters were legal documents concerned with settling donees on the lands assigned to them. They were not concerned with articulating or asserting the king's prerogatives in the overarching manner of a *dharma*-text. So the king's orders to specific villagers regarding the payment of taxes were not statements of universal principle but regulatory issues governing the internal workings of individual estates.[348] To put the matter in concrete geopolitical terms, the creation of estates in particular parts of India did not mean that land in every part of India was managed in the same way. Although new estates, as just noted, were being set up in the hinterland in considerable numbers, large areas must have remained with the crown. Furthermore, substantial tracts were already being managed according to systems that had been in place for hundreds of years. The Vidiśā region is an especially illustrative case. The network of dams and irrigation works constructed there from the third century BCE shows that Vidiśā had been subject to intense agrarian development long before the arrival of the Guptas.[349] And although it is necessarily problematic to argue from a lack of evidence, the complete absence of copper-plates from the Vidiśā region suggests that the Guptas and their subordinates had no need or desire to create semi-autonomous estates there.

There are, in addition, clear indications in the charters themselves that the crown was collecting tax on a substantial scale even in those places where the new estates were being established. This is shown by the frequent order to the king's men that they were not to enter the granted lands except in pursuit of criminals.[350] The fact that the king's men are repeatedly mentioned shows they were roving widely and that, in the ordinary course of events, they were collecting revenue and asserting their authority in every part of the realm. The creation of an estate introduced new boundaries – special zones that the king's men had previously crossed with impunity but from which they were now excluded. This new situation did not mean, of course, that the king's men suddenly ceased to exercise power on the land adjacent to or outside the new estates. Indeed the king's orders prove they were doing exactly that. Furthermore there is a specific instruction in some of the Uccakalpa grants that highlights the authority of the king's men: *samucitarajabhavyakarapratyayas ca na grahyah*, "And the tax tribute that is not properly the king's is not to be taken."[351] This statement is important: if the king's men were being told *not* to take what was *not* due to the king from an estate, then it is perfectly obvious that they were taking what was due. This shows that the king and his descendents could retain entitlements in, and thus revenue from, the estates they created in their realm. The king's entitlements, technically termed *bhoga*, were normally eight in number. As Derrett has pointed out in a valuable but seldom cited study, entitlements were not linked so, for example, a piece of land could be granted without the use of a well situated on that land.[352] The granting or selling of some entitlements did not mean, therefore, that the king lost his interest in the others. We must add, to avoid the error of undifferentiated generalisation, that some estates were excused from all taxes and received all entitlements, perhaps because they represented an attempt to colonise areas where economic viability was questionable and direct encouragement was needed. This was termed *sarvato bhoga* in the charters and constituted an "out-and-out" grant.[353]

The foregoing paragraph has touched on the scope and limitations of the copper-plate charters as historical sources. My aim has not been to describe the revenue system and king's entitlements in a definitive fashion but to raise a more fundamental question. This may be framed as follows: If the king already received a share of the land's produce by tradition, what motivated him to introduce a new layer of bureaucracy – in the form of brahmanas and other settlers – and to alienate some of his entitlements as a result? The answer is both political and economic. The establishment of *agrahara*-s and *devagrahara*-s created a network of individuals who would support the king politically because he had settled them on the land and guaranteed their tenure. On the economic side, brahmanas and the *varna*-system (i.e., landlords with attendant specialists and supporting technologies) had the potential to generate new forms

of wealth through pastoral and agrarian development, banking, trade, and micro-management. Quite apart from the entitlements the king may or may not have retained, there was an obvious incentive to innovate and develop: as each new estate prospered, so the economy expanded as a whole. The royal share would thus increase, either directly or by proxy. This is actually stated in the Baigram copper-plates. These record that when the land is granted to the donee, there will be no loss to the king's interest, but rather a possibility of gain in addition to the acquisition of religious merit.[354] Those rulers who failed to progress and adopt the new system were bound to be swallowed up by the more effective and ambitious. In this competitive scheme of things – relentlessly expansionist as we have said – villagers had to be compelled to accept new infrastructures, and kings were forced to hold back grasping agents and rapacious princes. Thus the instructions in the charters. This analysis is based on the assumption that villages were not some kind of sacrosanct, timeless, and fundamental element of Indian culture. Rather, historical agents consciously changed the constitution of villages for specific and clearly understood reasons. Their actions show, more generally, that religion and its cultural apparatus directly structured political and economic relationships rather than simply reflecting or expressing them.

## 2.13. UDAYAGIRI: THE GOD, EARTH, AND YEAR

This is now the place to show the relevance of the foregoing discussion to Udayagiri and so draw the present discussion to a close. The crux of the matter lies in the establishment of the gods – as indicated at the outset by our chapter title. The several processes by which gods were settled in their temple homes transformed them into real persons in a religious and legal sense (i.e., into sentient beings with unassailable rights to the things that were offered to them). The forms of worship developed for temple-gods were validated by establishing correspondences between men and gods: thus while brāhmaṇas were obviously and manifestly sentient, temple-gods were shown to be sentient through ritual service. And while brāhmaṇas had the *pañcamahāyajña* as their main framework for ritual exchange, temple-gods were given *pūjā* as theirs. As we have seen, these analogies allowed *gṛhya*-performances to be used as a template for constructing *pūjā*.

Flowers, garlands, lights, food, incense, perfume, garments, and *mantra*-texts were offered to the gods for their enjoyment. Property too was provided. Naturally, the gods did not enjoy property immediately and directly like other offerings. Nevertheless, land was crucial because it supplied, on a steady and sustainable basis, the requisite items for temple service. The properties involved can be easily imagined: plots for growing fresh flowers, areas for plants that could be used to make perfume and unguents, fields for oil-seed so lamps could

burn steadily in the shrine, large tracts of land for cotton so garments could be woven as part of the *sattra*. Property also supported the priests who managed the enterprise and conducted the god's worship. These specially created estates – *devāgrahāra* – were sometimes established by reorganising existing villages, at other times they seem to have been new colonies in the hinterland. Estates of the *agrahāra*-type lacked the temple ingredient, as already noted, but operated in the same way, the analogy between brāhmaṇas and gods guaranteeing that the *agrahāra* and *devāgrahāra* were analogous institutions.

The king, according to our model, established new estates to strengthen his political networks and to benefit his economy and his treasury. A locally based infrastructure encouraged agricultural and economic development through specialisation. This generated new wealth that, in due course, increased the king's share of tax. For all this to happen, the king's ability to intervene in land-tenure was crucial. He was obliged to respect the rights of existing land-owners, so draconian measures after the Chinese manner were not allowed. Anyway they would have been counterproductive. But the king could impose new modes of supervision and encourage new agrarian and pastoral regimes. As far as the hinterland went, he could exercise absolute authority without compunction – forest areas in those days were vast, and large tracts of sparsely populated land had potential for development. The king's authority to do these things rested on the precedent of king Sagara: just as Sagara's performance of the horse-sacrifice in hoary antiquity gave him possession of the earth, so kings in history could possess the earth by following the same ritual path. Some of the Gupta kings did indeed perform the horse sacrifice, but the same result could be achieved more efficiently and directly by engaging with Viṣṇu – the living god who, in the form of Varāha, was the theistic embodiment of sacrifice.[355]

We described at length in Section 1.11 how the king sought to replicate – in his own way and in his own time – the heroic achievements of god in mythopoetic time. These devotional undertakings brought the king closer to the deity who had incarnated himself to rescue the earth and who was, as a consequence, in ontological possession of it. The king's intimacy with Viṣṇu, generated through the engine of sacrifice and the culture of devotion, sanctioned his position as *cakravartin* and *paramabhāgavata* and confirmed his possession of an earth that he had "rescued" through war and conquest. Accordingly, Varāha legitimated the king's overall control of the land in his kingdom and – as noted at the beginning of this chapter – fixed his right to make divisions in the land according to his wishes. To sum up: if Varāha's rescue of the earth anticipated the king's conquests, then Varāha's desire to establish and divide the earth anticipated the decrees by which kings created landed estates in the territories under their control.

The intimate link between the king, the earth, and a theistically reconceived sacrifice does much to explain the prominence of Varāha at Udayagiri. The

monumental imagery advertised the king's intimacy with the god who possesses the earth and who is the embodiment of those rites that conferred legitimacy and possession of the earth. From very early days in Indian thought, the sacrifice was homologised with the horse, the year, and the *yajamāna*: the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* opens by saying that "the *ātman* of the sacrificial horse is the year," while the *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* asserts that "the horse is indeed the sacrificer."[356] Udayagiri enjoyed a special place in these equations because it was – as explained in Section 1.11 – a site for knowing the year and thus for scheduling, visualising, and memorialising the sacrifice. The potency of this knowledge is explained in the *Jyotiṣavedāṅga*.[357]

> vedā hi yajñārtham abhipravṛttāḥ kālānupūrvyā vihitāś ca yajñāḥ |
> tasmād idaṃ kālavidhānaśāstraṃ yo jyotiṣaṃ veda sa veda yajñān || 3
>
> The Vedas were brought forth for the sake of sacrifice and sacrifice is arranged according to time. Hence he who knows this astronomy – the science of ordering time – he indeed knows the sacrifice.

If the science of ordering time is a means of knowing the sacrifice, and if the sacrifice is the Puruṣa in the person of Viṣṇu, then knowing time is knowing Viṣṇu. This may seem like a syllogism, but modern schemes of formal deduction are no historical argument: we only need recall the statement in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 3 :6) that "Viṣṇu's very nature is time" – *kālasvarūpaṃ viṣṇoḥ* – and Lord Kṛṣṇa's bold assertion in *Gītā* (8: 4) that "I am alone the supreme sacrifice here in this body" – *adhiyajño 'ham evātra dehe*. Moreover the transcendent Puruṣa – identified as Nārāyaṇa by the fourth century as we have noted in these pages – had created the sacrifice as his immanent representation or *pratimā*. According to the *Kāṭhakasaṃhitā* and *Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa* this *pratimā* was the year.[358] All this means that if Udayagiri was a place for charting time and knowing the year, then it was also a place for charting a course toward Viṣṇu and a place for knowing him. This is, of course, the exact experience of the Gupta kings as depicted in the Udayagiri reliefs (Figures 6 and 23).[359]

One last correspondence completes the picture. The year, in addition much else, is the firm foundation – the *pratiṣṭhā* – of all beings. So declares *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 8: 4: 1: 22.[360] The year has this status because everything is conditioned by time and comes within its embrace. The gods are not beyond the reach of time and its endless cycles – even Viṣṇu sleeps during the rainy season and the cosmic night of creation. The link with Udayagiri, and its special importance for the establishment of the gods, should now be plain. As a pre-eminent "place of time," Udayagiri simultaneously embodies Viṣṇu, the sacrifice, the year, and the firm foundation of all things. The establishment of the gods in such a place – gods made manifest in images and consecrated in permanent homes – gave cosmic sanction to the gods as sentient beings in temples. These beings were fully real and could, for this reason, lay a firm hand

on the offerings given to them by their votaries. The special relationship of the king to these gods affirmed the king's power to divide the earth, sanctioned the creation of landed estates, and advanced the social order that supported divine service. This is how Udayagiri can be fittingly called a sacred landscape – a place that sustains and authenticates cosmology and religious belief far beyond oral or textual traditions, beyond even the individual icons of the gods and goddesses that are carved into the rocks at the site. It is through the landscape itself that the knowing pilgrim encounters the cycles of time and the living presence of the Lord. More historically, Udayagiri is a place were the rising power of theism was harmonised with ancient systems of ritual and knowledge, a place where the gods were established and made ready to dominate the religious landscape of later India. In every way, then, Udayagiri is the starting point for all that is fundamental to the temple culture, social dispensation, and political constitution of the medieval world.

THREE

# RITUAL ACTION AND RITUAL ACTORS

satyakṣamādamaśamavrataśaucadhairyya-
svāddhyāyavṛttavinayasthitibuddhyupetaiḥ |
vidyātaponidhibhir asmayitaiś ca viprair
yyad bhrājate grahagaṇaiḥ kham iva pradīptaiḥ ||

Like the sky with its brilliant multitude of planets – the city is illuminated with priests endowed with truth, patience, self-control, tranquillity, holy vows, purity, fortitude, study, good-conduct, refinement and steadfastness – priests who abound in learning and penance and are free from the excitement of surprise.

Mandasaur inscription of Bandhuvarman[1]

The practice of establishing gods as visible and permanent entities in temples meant that Indian deities came to be accepted as corporeal and sentient. These kinds of gods, advanced by the patronage of the Guptas and their subordinates from the fourth century, were thought to enjoy the offerings made to them by their votaries and were understood to respond by granting blessings, merit, and the fulfilment of desires. The sentience of temple gods also meant that they were treated as competent beings with proprietary rights. This elicited the formation of endowments to support religious service, a new development that did much to enrich temples and lay the foundation for the cults of medieval India. How all these things were effected and justified has been explained earlier in this book. In this chapter, I will turn from the gods and the places in which they were worshipped to the individuals who performed the rituals and controlled religious life. This involves, in essence, a shift from holy sites to holy men.

## 3.1. THE PRIESTHOOD

The key ritual actors of the Gupta age, by which I mean the priesthood, created cultural products that are manifestly significant: sacrificial showpieces like the royal consecration, Sanskrit texts and metrical inscriptions, the living images of early Hinduism, and the supporting structure of sacred lore and religious practice. The Mandasaur inscription of Bandhuvarman, quoted at the head of this chapter, presents an idealised picture of these people. Separately and together they were responsible for the enabling knowledges of Gupta society, from personal rites of passage and daily worship to statecraft and metaphysics. The names of a few are preserved in early commentaries – like Kauṇḍinya and Śabara – and we have encountered priestly donees in the copper-plate charters – like Amṛtadeva and Choḍugomika. Apart from these survivals, however, the history of the priesthood is fragmentary and incomplete. As a result, the ways in which priests shaped the edifice of Gupta civilisation is a subject that has not drawn much attention.[2] Side-stepping the reason why – it may be put down to a modern need for secular and political histories – I will enter the question of the priesthood with Bhitrī, the Vaiṣṇava temple-site that drew detailed attention in Section 2.11.

The pillar inscription at Bhitrī clearly invokes the presence of priests but poignantly highlights their historical elusiveness. As already noted, the inscription describes four ritual acts: (1) emperor Skandagupta made an image of Śārṅgin; (2) he had this image established; (3) he granted a village as an endowment; (4) he assigned the merit of giving the village and making the god to his father. We have dealt with the social and legal implications of this ritual sequence in the previous chapter. To briefly recap, the terminology in the inscription clarifies that when a representation (*pratimā*) was changed into a living image (*mūrti*) it became a juridic personality with permanent legal rights to the property given to it by donors. This change of the image – to focus on the religious aspect of the event – was achieved by establishment rituals that transformed an inanimate object into a sentient being. The priests who effected this metamorphosis, and who may have held the village in the god's name, are not mentioned in the inscription. Nonetheless, their presence is indicated by the passive voice: the king himself may have "made the image" (*pratimāṃ cakāra*) but it "was established" (*pratiṣṭhapya*) by somebody else. In commentary we may say *brāhmaṇaiḥ pratiṣṭhāpita*, "established by priests."

With this we are forced to confront some difficult historical questions. Who were the priests who officiated at Bhitrī? To what school or spiritual lineage did they belong? What was their relationship to the king and to other sacerdotal groups? What kind of rituals did they perform? The copper-plates give some insight into priests and their work, while the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* furnishes a general introduction to the rituals. Both have been discussed in Chapter 2. But these sources do not provide information about the priesthood as a social organisation

or information about its relationship with royal power. And no text otherwise is explicit on these matters. This obliges us to reconstruct the situation from indirect evidence, much of it fragmentary. My analysis, to anticipate, shows that the Gupta court was guided by a religious triumvirate: the royal chaplain (*purohita*), the cadre of sacrificial priests (*ṛtvij*), and the royal preceptor (*ācārya*). No doubt there were others, as Daud Ali has explained, but these members of the royal household played different roles, in many cases subordinate.[3] My purpose here, therefore, is to explore the institutional identity of the *purohita*, *ṛtvij*, and *ācārya* and to outline their respective domains of knowledge, action, and power.

## 3.2. PUROHITA

The *Arthaśāstra* is a useful guide to the general organisation of the priesthood given its historical proximity to the early Gupta court.[4] In his first chapter, Kauṭilya provides criteria for the appointment of ministers and councillors. He then turns to the question of the *purohita*, a subject to which he devotes considerable attention. The qualifications for the post – a kind of "royal chaplain" – were daunting: the ideal candidate had to be "of exalted family and personal character, thoroughly trained in the Veda and its supplements, versed in divine portents, in omens and in the administration of justice, and capable of counteracting divine and human calamities by means of the expiatory rites of the *Atharvaveda*."[5] This shows that the ideal *purohita* had to be conversant with Vedic knowledge yet equally able to predict disaster, wield power, and deflect evil influences. The *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* deals with the *purohita* using closely related vocabulary. It enjoins the king to appoint an exalted chaplain who is knowledgeable in divine portents and who is well versed in the administration of justice and in the *Atharvaveda*.[6] The ritual duties of the *purohita* to which these texts allude are those listed in the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa*: (a) *śāntikaṃ karma*, rituals to ward off dangers and ills from the king and kingdom; (b) *pauṣṭikaṃ karma*, rituals to restore the king's health and vigour; (c) *ābhicārikaṃ karma*, rituals to harm enemies; (d) *nityaṃ* and *naimittikaṃ karma*, regular and occasional rituals required of the king; (e) *prāyaścittīyaṃ karma*, expiatory rites; and (f) *aurdhvadehikaṃ karma*, mortuary rites.[7] That these rituals were known and performed in the fourth century, as opposed to being merely rehearsed in textual lists, is shown by a Prakrit inscription of the early Pallava king Siṃhavarman which records that the *śāntika* and *pauṣṭika* rites where performed for the king's benefit.[8]

The great importance of the *purohita*'s work is confirmed by his high ranking in the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, Amarasiṃha's famous word encyclopaedia. The material in this text is not arranged alphabetically like a modern dictionary but thematically and hierarchically, making it a useful source for cultural categories in the Gupta age. Although Amarasiṃha is infuriatingly succinct, his listing of the king followed by ministers and counsellors is logical and unsurprising.

Among the high officers of state, the *purohita* stands as the first *mahāmātra*; that he was in charge of disciplinary measures is shown by the various words for a "judge" that are given in the same verse.[9] About the Veda of the *purohita* Amarasiṃha has nothing to say.

Additional information about the *purohita* is found in Kāmandaki's *Nītisāra*. Although Kāmandaki does not explicitly name the royal chaplain, the opening lines of his treatise are revealing. After the dedicatory verse, Kāmandaki turns to the celebration of his master Viṣṇugupta Kauṭilya, the author of the *Arthaśāstra*. The relevant passage runs as follows:[10]

vaṃśe viśālavaṃśyānām ṛṣīṇām iva bhūyasām |
apratigrāhakāṇāṃ yo babhūva bhuvi viśrutaḥ || 2
jātavedā ivārciṣmān vedān vedavidāṃ varaḥ |
yo 'dhītavān sucaturaścaturo'py ekavedavat || 3
yasyābhicāravajreṇa vajrajvalanatejasaḥ |
papāta mūlataḥ śrīmān suparvā nandaparvataḥ || 4
ekākī mantraśaktyā yaḥ śaktyā śaktidharopamaḥ |
ājahāra nṛcandrāya candraguptāya medinīm || 5
nītiśāstrāmṛtaṃ dhīmān arthśāstramahodadheḥ |
samuddadhe namas tasmai viṣṇuguptāya vedhase || 6

Obeisance to Viṣṇugupta!
Born to a line of illustrious forbears, celebrated on earth and
greater even than the ancient sages for refusing customary gifts;

Effulgent as a sacrificial fire, the best knower of the Vedas,
Brilliant and clever, he grasped the four Vedas as if they were one;

Whose magical spell, splendid as a flash of lightning,
Uprooted the foundation of the mountain-like Nanda,
prosperous and powerful;

Who, like the weapon-bearer Kārttikeya, used his weapon of
wise counsel
To single-handedly secure the world for Candragupta, that prince
among men;

Salutations to that author, who produced the nectar of *Nītiśāstra*
Out of the mighty ocean of *Arthaśāstra*.

A striking feature of these lines is the way they match the characteristics of the *purohita* in the *Arthaśāstra*. To be more precise, the *Nītisāra* shows that each characteristic found living application in the person of Viṣṇugupta. Placing the accounts side by side clarifies this point:

- The *Arthaśāstra* calls on the prospective *purohita* to come from an exalted family and have a good reputation; the *Nītisāra* describes Viṣṇugupta as the son of a great family, widely known for their high-minded lack of greed.

- The *Arthaśāstra* calls on the prospective *purohita* to be trained in the Veda and its supplements; the *Nītisāra* describes Viṣṇugupta as consuming knowledge like a sacrificial fire, so clever in Vedic study that he grasped the four Vedas as if they were one.
- The *Arthaśāstra* calls on the prospective *purohita* to be versed in divine portents, omens, and the administration of justice; the *Nītisāra* describes how Viṣṇugupta applied a magical spell to bring down the evil Nanda dynasty.[11]
- The *Arthaśāstra* calls on the prospective *purohita* to be capable of counteracting divine and human calamities using the special techniques of the *Atharvaveda*; the *Nītisāra* describes how Viṣṇugupta applied his power of counsel (*mantraśakti*) to deliver the earth to his king.

The seeming tenuousness of the last parallel requires some clarification. The *purohita* in the *Arthaśāstra* operates in a ritual arena, correcting the mistakes of others and countering evil influences. In apparent contrast, the *Nītisāra* has the *purohita* operating in the world of men, using his powerful words of counsel to deliver political results. The difference is substantial from the contemporary perspective, but, as every student of Indology knows, sacrificial rituals were not regarded as decorative ceremonies in ancient times. Rather, they were performed with specific results in mind and were understood to be powerful and efficacious. And because mundane and ritual acts were both termed *karma*, the power of words and mantric incantations controlled both spheres in equal measure. To put the four qualities of the *purohita* in general perspective, then, the *Arthaśāstra* can be said to present the theoretical; the *Nītisāra*, practical.

Kāmandaki's use of the ideal qualities of a *purohita* to celebrate the achievements of Viṣṇugupta Kauṭilya has a number of implications. Most importantly, it tells us that Kauṭilya held the office of *purohita* and that the *Arthaśāstra* can, as a consequence, be understood as a book representing the special knowledge and responsibilities of that position. This means that the various strategies, rituals, and other activities described in the *Arthaśāstra* were under the general jurisdiction of the *purohita*. Given the propinquity of the *Arthaśāstra* to the early Gupta court, these points tell us that the Atharvavedic *purohita* functioned as the king's agent and that he used his knowledge not only to advance the interests of the Gupta state but to supervise ceremonies involving other priests, ensuring particularly that ritual blunders were duly corrected.

Before turning to the priests with whom the *purohita* interacted, I would like to deal with the epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the position. Such evidence is, prima facie, nonexistent. Unlike ministers, who are mentioned in inscriptions and sometimes even composed them, the *purohita* is conspicuous by his absence.[12] One way of addressing this problem might be to suggest that because the *purohita* belonged to the *Atharvaveda* and had special imprecatory

knowledge that fell within the general domain of this *saṃhita*, some understanding of the *purohita*'s cultic affiliations and social place might be gained from inscriptions that mention those learned in the *Atharvaveda*. Unfortunately such inscriptions are few in number and none explicitly Gupta.[13] Looking to the immediate post-Gupta period, however, a helpful lead is provided by the Nermand copper-plate of Samudrasena, a record dating to the sixth century as noted in Section 2.10. This inscription documents an endowment that enabled brāhmaṇas of the *Atharvaveda* to worship a *liṅga* at the temple of Kapāleśvara.[14] This shows that Atharvavedins were integrated into the worship of Śiva, the name Kapāleśvara further indicating that they were associated with cults of the Kāpālika type.[15] The degree to which this evidence can be applied retroactively to the Atharvavedic *purohita* of the fifth century is revealed by the *Arthaśāstra* and, to a lesser extent, the *Nītisāra*. As already noted, these texts show that the *purohita* had to be an expert in a variety of omens, spells, and incantations. Additional data from these texts show the range of these activities and the precise nature of the *purohita*'s concerns.

The most revealing material regarding omens and related matters is found in the penultimate book of the *Arthaśāstra*. Entitled "Secret Practices" (*aupaniṣadikam*), this lists a substantial number of chemical weapons, magical rituals, and delusive techniques.[16] In the *Nītisāra*, Kāmandaki seems to be referring to these practices when he states that "secret applications" and "secret rites" could be of strategic use in certain circumstances.[17] The plants, seeds, animal products, and other substances that could be used to make various decoctions, smokes, and powders need not detain us; nor do we need dwell on their deadly or miraculous effects. What concerns us is the identity of the people involved in the "secret practices" and the working relationship they had with each other. As might be expected, the *Arthaśāstra* does not describe this explicitly, but the text does make a number of statements from which we can draw relevant conclusions. To begin, it is perhaps no surprise to find that secret agents were used to plant weapons in the personal effects of an enemy king. In addition to these agents, the *Arthaśāstra* instructs that poisons should be handled by approved men and women of the barbarian community (*mleccha*). These people were to disguise themselves as humpbacks, idiots, blind people, and the like, and to appear credible in terms of the dress, customs, and language of the country they were to infiltrate.[18] The use of "outsiders" may seem ironic and cynical to modern eyes, but the practice sprang naturally from long-standing concerns with purity in Indian society. Kenneth Zysk has shown that these concerns resulted in the exclusion of medical knowledge and physicians from strictly orthodox circles for many centuries.[19] As the science of poison was a branch of medicine, it was perhaps inevitable that the messy business of handling poisons should be put in the hands of those removed from the normative core of the Indian social world. And barbarians were indeed removed: in

Manu's law book – a work known and cited in the Gupta period – they are put on the same level as pigs and horses![20]

After dealing with barbarians and outlining what they should do, the *Arthaśāstra* provides an exhaustive list of the substances they were to administer. These substances could cause death, blindness, stupefaction, leprosy, consumption, paralysis, fever, dumbness, and deafness.[21] Following this account, the text turns to magical weapons and assorted techniques through which a person might acquire special powers. Among other things, there are descriptions of how to be immune from hunger, to see at night, to walk great distances without tiring, to put people to sleep, to open locked doors, and to undo chains. There are even ways of flying through the air and becoming invisible. Unlike Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*-s, where similar or identical powers are obtained by drawing on inner spiritual resources, the *Arthaśāstra*'s weapons and powers are obtained through material ingredients collected in the outer world. These materials included plants, fruits, seeds, and roots but frequently involved substances of an extremely impure nature. Thus, we find calls for vulture fat, lion semen, menstrual blood, monkey tendons, excrement, dead dogs, aborted foetuses, human flesh from a funeral pyre, ash and bone from a cremation ground, and dead infants from a cemetery. Conventional social barriers were also breached in collecting the necessary ingredients. In one case rodent scrapings were to be purchased from a Śvapākia woman, in another mustard seeds are to be collected from a harlot, curd from a menstruating woman, and meat from a Caṇḍāla. The Śvapākia and Caṇḍāla were two low outcaste groups, the level of the first indicated by the name, literally "dog-cookers." Ritual objects also defied normal convention: human skulls served as bowls for brewing decoctions or were used as containers for sprouting seeds; a murderer's thigh-bone could be made into a container for salve; pins for various voodoo-like rituals were whittled down from the bones of men who had been impaled on stakes.

Beyond ingredients and ritual objects, the time of year when certain decoctions were prepared and the accompanying rituals performed tells us something about the conceptual landscape in which the weapons and powers of the *Arthaśāstra* were created. One time that is repeatedly mentioned is the Puṣya day (i.e., the day on which the moon is in the asterism of Puṣya).[22] In two cases the day is specified as the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the asterism of Puṣya.[23] As shown in Table 1 and outlined in the corresponding discussion, Pauṣa has the shortest days of the year with the winter solstice normally falling in that month. The fourteenth day of the dark fortnight (i.e., the night of the new moon on the shortest day) would have been the darkest night of the entire year. This time of concentrated darkness would have been an ideal moment to reinforce the secrecy and darkness of the rites with which the *Arthaśāstra* was concerned. One further observation can be made

with regard to this time of year. The winter solstice is the culmination of the *dakṣiṇāyana*, the six-month period during which the position of the rising sun on the horizon progresses steadily southward. This half of the year was connected with the world of the fathers, a world ruled by Yamarāja, the lord of death and regent of the southern quarter. This dove-tails with the frequent use of bone and other material from the cremation ground in Book 14, and with the age-old religious idea of the south as terrifying and inauspicious.[24]

These associations with Yamarāja are confirmed by an important ritual in the *Arthaśāstra* for producing an invincible type of fire. The text instructs that flames from objects set ablaze by lightning bolts should be fed with wood burnt by lightning and then offered to Rudra under Kṛttikā or Bharaṇī. Such fire, when directed towards an enemy, burns without remedy.[25] The element in this complicated ritual that takes us back to Yamarāja is Bharaṇī because Yamarāja presides over this constellation.[26] The matter, perhaps inevitably, does not end with this parallel. The ritual to produce invincible fire could also be performed, as just noted, under Kṛttikā. This constellation leads us to other deities and concerns. Kṛttikā – the six stars of Pleiades that are said to be the wives of the seven seers – gave its name to Kārttika, a month particularly suited to military exploits because it comes at the end of the rainy season and is the time when armies can begin to move easily across the Indian countryside. The month is accordingly connected with Skanda, the god of war. The mythological genesis and early biography of this god articulates the link.[27] Skanda's father is said to be Śiva because he sprang from his seed; his surrogate mother was the river goddess Gaṅgā. These two became Skanda's parents because Agni found Śiva's seed too hot to hold and placed it in the river. After a watery gestation, Skanda was nourished by the six Kṛttikās. For this reason, Skanda carries the matronymic Kārttikeya. This explains his association with the constellation Kṛttikā and also his six heads (*ṣaṇmukha*), an iconography that appears on early coins.[28] Kārttikeya's vehicle is the peacock – an emblem of the rising sun – and his attribute a wild cock, something he often holds in the earliest representations.[29] Both birds are bellicose and have the habit of leaping when they fight. How Skanda came to dominate war is explained in the *Mahābhārata* (*Vanaparvan* 37: 218). This tells the story of Devasenā, the army of the gods personified as a goddess. She was rescued by Indra from the hands of a demon and delivered to Skanda as a bride. As a result of this union Skanda took charge of armies and the month of Kārttika became the best time for war.

These desultory observations on Skanda bring us back to the opening verses of the *Nītisāra* with which we opened our discussion of the *purohita*. As we have seen, these verses indicate that Viṣṇugupta Kauṭilya held the office of *purohita* and that the *Arthaśāstra* can be understood as a text detailing the special knowledge and responsibilities of that position. This general conclusion is reinforced by the particulars of the ritual used to produce invincible fire. The

parallels can be summarised as follows: (1) In the *Nītisāra*, Viṣṇugupta Kauṭilya is compared to Śaktidhara (i.e., Kārttikeya). In the *Arthaśāstra*, the war-ritual used to make invincible fire could be performed under Kṛttikā, the constellation after which Kārttikeya was named.[30] (2) The ritual to produce invincible fire could also be performed under Bharaṇī, the constellation over which Yamarāja presides. Now Indian tradition is unanimous in defining Yamarāja as the king of death, the "restrainer" and judge par excellence. This leads us back to the *purohita* via Kauṭilya, who insists that the royal chaplain be skilled in the administration of justice. We also come back to the *purohita* via Amarasiṃha, who qualifies the word *purohita* with various words for "judge."[31] (3) In the *Nītisāra*, Viṣṇugupta's power is said to be as "splendid as a flash of lightning," a phrase suggesting that lightning was a key element in the weapon-system of Kauṭilya. In the *Arthaśāstra*, lightning-based fire is the first subject discussed after poison and poison-based weapons, a textual position showing that fire derived from lightning held a high place in the Kauṭilyan arsenal.[32] No doubt further links of this type could be found, but the evidence given so far is sufficient to show that the *purohita* was the dominant ritual actor on the *Arthaśāstra*'s stage of "secret practice." By way of elaboration, we may say that the *purohita* controlled the chemical weapons and powers dealt with in Book 14 of the *Arthaśāstra* and that he was the key celebrant of the rituals that made these things efficacious.

This foray into the ritual universe of the *Arthaśāstra* was prompted by the Nermand copper-plate inscription. As will be recalled, this inscription shows that sixth-century Atharvavedic pundits were integrated into the worship of Śiva and were associated with cults of the Kāpālika type.[33] What we have gathered from the *Arthaśāstra* and *Nītisāra* indicates that the Atharvavedic *purohita* of the fifth century anticipated such relationships (i.e., that the Gupta-period *purohita* was a harbinger of the Kāpālika cults of medieval India). This is no doubt a contentious observation. In support of it, I would like to touch on three general themes that are representative of the mature cult and for which we have reasonably secure evidence in Gupta times. These are (1) the worship of goddesses, (2) erotico-mysticism, and (3) the culture of the cremation ground. These themes, to which I will append a few supplementary remarks, provide a useful framework for summarising and concluding our discussion of the *purohita*.

We begin with the cremation ground. That the *purohita* had frequent recourse to the cremation ground is clear from the transgressive nature of his rituals and ritual equipment – it was in the cremation ground that the *purohita* performed a number of his rites, and it was there that he collected ash, bone, and body parts. The use of skulls (*kapāla*) is specifically stipulated.[34] The cremation ground was also a place for mystical practices of an erotic or necrophilic variety. Some examples make this clear. In order for the celebrant to become invisible,

the text instructs that he should make a special eye salve and place it in the skull of a night-roaming creature. This should then be inserted into the vagina of a dead woman. After being taken out in the month of Pauṣa, it should be burnt and kept in an iron container.[35] In another case, various ingredients are to be collected and buried in a cremation ground, again in Pauṣa. Unearthing the ingredients after a month, the text instructs that they should be ground into powder by a virgin and made into pills. These pills have the power to put people to sleep.[36] Another method of inducing sleep was to utter a *mantra* which invoked the power of woman's sexual organ.[37] While these examples practically exhaust the *Arthaśāstra* in terms of explicit references, they are sufficient to show that the text assumed that sexual energies served as conduits of power. From these things, it is no great step to our third theme: the worship of goddesses and the special powers they have to offer. In the *Arthaśāstra*, a number of goddesses are invoked in connection with the "secret practices," most notably Aditi, Anumati, and Sarasvatī.[38] The position of the invocation mentioning these deities at the end of *Arthaśāstra* 14: 1 indicates that it applies to the whole chapter. In another place, a number of gods and demons are invoked with the goddess Paulomī.[39] Paulomī is a name of Indrāṇī, a constant member of the mother-goddesses or Mātṛkās in mature iconography. Indrāṇī's characteristic weapon is the lightning bolt or *vajra*. The relevance of this to the *purohita* should, at this stage, be reasonably obvious. As we have seen, some of Kauṭilya's powers rested on magical spells (*abhicāravajra*) that Kāmandaki says are radiant like flashes of lightning (*vajrajvalanatejas*). The centrality of Mātṛkā-worship to the business of the *purohita* is also shown by his *mantraśakti*. This can be understood as "power of counsel" and has been translated this way in the preceeding treatment of the *Nītisāra*. However, it can equally refer to the power of sacred incantation or invocation. Kāmandaki's comparison of Viṣṇugupta to Kārttikeya as Śaktidhara, the bearer of weapons or powers, indicates that the author intended the term to be understood in both ways. The mother-goddesses were integral to the equation because they are the energies (*śakti*) of the gods. The classic description of this is found in the *Devīmāhātmya*, a text that seems to have been composed in the second half of the eighth century.[40] In addition to their status as powers or energies, the mother-goddesses are also essential syllables – the *mātṛkā* – which, thanks to equation of name and form, have an inherent power to embody and so capture aspects of the physical world by their use.[41]

If the goddesses are at once energies, and energy or power can be derived from them, then it was only natural for the *purohita* to be involved in their propitiation. Coincidentally, I would note that Kāmandaki's comparison of Viṣṇugupta to Śaktidhara or Kārttikeya also anticipates the mature Kāpālika cult because followers of the sect were identified by six insignia (*ṣaṇmudrā*).[42] These insignia, various ornaments placed round the head and neck, recall the first

representations of Kārttikeya with six heads to which we have already drawn attention.

These observations lead us to two places in the religious landscape of Gupta India: the cremation ground and the goddess-temple. Of ancient cremation grounds not much can be known. Even if they could be located archaeologically, it seems unlikely that anything could be found of the *purohita* and his activities. The goddess-temple presents a different situation. Images of the goddesses survive in considerable numbers from the Gupta period, the most important examples in situ being at Udayagiri. For the present purpose, I will focus on the suite of shrines near Caves 3 and 4.[43] Cave 3 has an elaborately carved doorway leading to a rock-cut chamber. Inside is a standing image of Kārttikeya dating to the opening years of the fifth century.[44] Cave 4, a few metres to the north, has a similar doorway and contains a *liṅga* with a single face.[45] Immediately to the right of this cave is a shallow rectangular niche containing six damaged female figures. These are identifiable as the six Kṛttikās who nourished Skanda in his youth. Beside them is a male figure, now very mutilated. Although little more than the torso is left, he is clearly ithyphallic and has a banner at his side. This identifies the sculpture as Skanda, the banner or flag being a standard emblem according to medieval texts describing the god.[46] The Bihār pillar inscription speaks of Skanda leading the Mātṛs, indicating the Kṛttikās were identified as mothers by the fifth century.[47]

This cluster of caves and their images – Kārttikeya, a Śiva *liṅga*, Skanda, and the Kṛttikā mother-goddesses – make this a likely cult spot for the Atharvavedic *purohita*. Some indication of the religious services performed there can be gleaned from the *Skandayāga* or *Dhūrtakalpa*, one of the supplements of the *Atharvaveda*.[48] This text lays down that the worship of Skanda should be performed thrice yearly in the months of Phālguna, Āṣāḍha, and Kārttika. In the performance, an image of Skanda is set up together with the mothers.[49] Skanda is then offered water, perfumes, flowers, incense, lamps, leaves, and various kinds of food and drink. After the offerings have been made, a fire-offering is performed, and prayers are made to various deities, including Śiva.[50] An amulet is then tied on the wrist of the sacrificer. Taking these rites with those already discussed, we can start to see parts of an annual cycle, which is only partially preserved or presented in the *Arthaśāstra*: Pauṣa appears to have been a period for withdrawal and preparation; Kārttika, a period for application and action. The rest of the cycle may be inferred from the supplements of the *Atharvaveda* that attached lore and rituals to each constellation and time of year.[51]

Another point worth noting in the *Skandayāga* is the description of Skanda as Dhūrta, literally the "rogue" or "cheat." Summarising and supplementing what has been expressed about this appellation, Modak remarked: "Skanda is a god of cunning and roguery, a patron of thieves and has a number of resemblances with Hermes as described by Homer. His knavery can be seen from the fact that

he is a libertine (*svacchanda*) and is desirous of the wife of his brother Viśākha in spite of the thousand damsels who always surround him."[52] Further light is shed on the problem by the *Nītisāra*, specifically Kāmandaki's comparison of Viṣṇugupta to Śaktidhara, a point that has already drawn attention several times in this section. The importance of the comparison is shown by the name Kauṭilya, a word meaning "deceitful" or "crooked."[53] However we choose to finally explain Dhūrta as a name of Skanda, it is at least clear that Viṣṇugupta derived his name Kauṭilya from the "rogue" aspect of Skanda, the words *dhūrta* and *kauṭilya* being synonyms for all practical purposes. This reenforces a number of associations we have been trying to establish in this section, most basically the link between Viṣṇugupta Kauṭilya and the Atharvavedic *purohita*. The way the *Arthaśāstra* describes the "secret practices" also points in this direction. In making a summary and an apology, the text tells us that "practices accompanied by *mantra*-s and medicine and those caused by illusion – with these one should destroy enemies and protect ones own people."[54] These categories (i.e., *mantra*, medicine, and illusion) conform to the main headings of *Arthaśāstra*, Chapter 14: (1) deception by the production of marvels and (2) deception by the application of medicine and *mantra*.[55] Aside from showing the ways in which the *purohita* intersected with the world of the physician, the centrality of deception (*pralambhana*) shows the *purohita* was inspired by Skanda as the deceptive Dhūrta.[56] Before leaving the *Skandayāga*, we should note finally that it provides iconographic information supporting the association of the Atharvavedic *purohita* with Caves 3 and 4 at Udayagiri. Skanda is specifically described in the text as having "bells and banners" and as "a youth ever surrounded by a troop of mothers."[57] Why there are six mothers at Udayagiri is also evident from this text: they are the six stars in the constellation Kṛttikā which nourished Kārttikeya in his youth. The mothers do not yet number seven because the theological system of the *Devīmāhātmya*, in which the great goddess Durgā manifests herself as Kālī Cāmuṇḍā, had yet to emerge.

A contemporary description of a goddess shrine, the only one from the Gupta period, is preserved in the Gaṅgdhār inscription of Viśvavarman. This is dated Mālava year 480 (CE 423–24).[58] The inscription's purpose was to record the building of a temple of Viṣṇu and an accompanying shrine for the Mothers. The work was dedicated in Kārttika, the month that, as we have seen, was special to Kārttikeya and the divine Mothers. The various buildings mentioned in the inscription were commissioned by Mayūrākṣaka, the king's minister (*nṛpati saciva*). The *saciva* was part of the king's inner circle and his duties would have brought him into regular contact with the *purohita*.[59] Although the Gaṅgdhār inscription does not actually mention the *purohita*, a relationship between him and the minister is nonetheless indicated by the name Mayūrākṣaka. Literally this means "Peacock-eye." Now because the peacock is Skanda's vehicle (*vāhana*), the minister was, through his name, representing himself as the

watchful support of Skanda and, by allegorical extension, the *purohita*. The supportive role of the peacock is well illustrated in a fifth-century sculpture from Vārāṇasī.[60] In playing this part, Mayūrākṣaka constructed temples and added to his store of merit, socially respectable concerns for which the *purohita*, with his esoteric interests and transgressive practices, had no time or truck. The passage in the Gaṅgdhār inscription runs as follows:[61]

> mātṝṇāñ ca |prac*u|ditaghanātyartthanihrādinīnām
> | tāntrodbhūtaprabalapavanodvarttitāmbhonidhīnām |
> | – – – – – – |gatam idaṃ ḍākinīsaṃprakīrṇṇam |
> veśmātyuggraṃ nṛpatisacivo [*]kārayat puṇyahetoḥ ||
>
> For the sake of religious merit, the king's minister [Mayūrākṣaka] commissioned this very terrifying abode, A place filled with *ḍākinī*-s and characterised by . . .
> An abode of the Mothers whose thunderous cries impel the rain clouds, and whose treasure – the waters – bursts forth with the mighty wind produced by their lyre.

Because this reading and translation differ from those previously published, a few words are needed by way of commentary. The basic purport of the inscription is clear enough: the minister made a terrifying abode of the divine Mothers (*mātṝṇāṃ veśmātyugraṃ sacivo 'kārayat*). Beyond this, some of the descriptive adjectives applied to the temple and to the Mothers are not without interesting difficulties. The phrase ending in *gatam* seems irretrievably lost; the temple was anyway free from or characterised by certain qualities. As to the Mothers, the participle in the first *pāda* was reconstructed by Fleet as *pramudita* and translated "the divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts of joy and who stir up the (very) oceans with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion." A different understanding emerges if we reconstruct *pracudita* and construe the adjectival phrases in a complementary fashion. In the first case, we have the cries of the Mothers impelling the rain clouds (i.e., their fierce screaming is equated with the thunder that rolls round the clouds at the onset of the Monsoon). The next phrase carries forward the seasonal theme by describing the wind and the downpour of rain, here defined as their special treasure (taking *ambhonidhi* not in the general sense of "ocean" but as a *karmadhāraya* compound).[62] Then there is the problem of *tāntra*, a word that has mesmerised commentators.[63] Just what this means can be explained by the iconography of the Mothers, notably the fifth-century panel at Rāmgarh, a site near Badoh that drew attention in the closing section of Chapter 1. The row of rock-cut Mothers there shows one of the figures holding an ancient Indian lute or lyre (Figure 37). Based on this, I think that the word *tāntra* in the inscription has little to do with occidental Tantrism but rather with a stringed musical instrument (i.e., an object on which the strings are "stretched" [$\sqrt{tan}$]

37 Rāmgarh (District Vidishā, MP). Rock-cut images of goddesses, one seated and holding a lyre, fifth century. *Scale 50 cm. Courtesy of Anne Casile.*

across a curved frame). Aside from appearing at Rāmgarh, this kind of instrument is shown on Gupta coins and terracottas and in some carved panels at Udayagiri itself.[64] It is this instrument and its music that produces the wind and causes the clouds to burst. We have already described how the hill at Udayagiri was a seasonal site, closely tied to the onset of the Monsoon. Unfortunately, the goddess shrines at Udayagiri are too damaged to determine if the individual figures carried musical instruments. This seems likely, however, given the dependence of Rāmgarh on Udayagiri, a point made in detail in Section 1.12.

The information given in the preceding pages about the *purohita* is far from encyclopaedic, but it is enough to show that this priest moved in two very different worlds: on one side he was a royal intimate, responsible for deflecting evil away from the king's person and for deploying powerful weapons in defence of the state and social order; on the other, he mixed freely with people beyond the fringe of acceptable society, engaging in frightful rites and handling substances that were hazardous and impure. Spanning these contradictions, the *purohita* mediated between the tightly circumscribed world of orthodoxy and the dangerous but necessary power of everything that lay outside the *varṇa*-system. And while the *purohita*'s work involved ways and things deemed impure by the orthodox world, his motivation was, ironically, the well-being,

betterment, and expansion of that world. As the *Arthaśāstra* declares in the opening verse of Book 14: "For the sake of protecting the four *varṇa*-s, he should use secret practices against the unrighteous."[65] To put the matter in socio-political terms, the activities of the *purohita* were part of the strategies formulated by the king and his circle to extend their power and influence, expand the compass of dharmic acts, and shape the destiny of their subjects. The figure in the later religious history of India who embodies these dichotomies is the *mahāsiddha* or great adept, the archetypal case being Padmasambhava, the esoteric Indian master who used his manifold powers to bring down the ancient dispensation of Tibet and deliver the country to the hands of the Yarlung kings and the Buddhist dispensation.[66]

This allusion to Padmasambhava reminds us that the *purohita* operated primarily in a ritual domain and that his main role was ceremonial regulation – an activity that might involve supervision, correction, and, at times, interference. In the "secret practices" of the *Arthaśāstra*, interference is explicitly described in a passage that tells us how human-bone and left-hand circumambulation could be used to prevent a fire from burning at a particular spot. Why should the *purohita* want to do this? From the ritual perspective, the answer is simple: these actions could effectively "unwind" an opponent's sacrifice by making it impossible for the enemy to light the fires in which the offerings were going to be made.[67] Using whatever subterfuge was needed, the *purohita* could enter a foreign land, infiltrate the enemy's sacrificial ground and stop the sacrifice in its tracks. We can easily imagine the *purohita* employing his whole bag of tricks to achieve this end: walking great distances without becoming tired, avoiding hunger through the use of decoctions, applying special techniques to silence guard-dogs as he passed. Finally, becoming invisible by one of several means, he would approach the enemy's sacrificial altar. Putting his opponents to sleep if necessary, the *purohita* would have gone round the altar thrice with his special flame-retardant. This would have prevented the sacred fires from being kindled and utterly confused the sacrifice. In case the *purohita*'s opponents were trained in countermeasures, he could strike them dumb so they would be unable to recite corrective *mantra*-s.[68]

The political implications of these deeds would have been substantial. Should the *purohita*'s opponents have been preparing for a royal consecration, his manoeuvres would have ended the enemy king's claim to royal legitimacy and thrown his chiefdom into chaos. The ensuing tumult would have made for an impressive spectacle: dumb-struck priests running about willy-nilly as they faced the towering rage of their king. Manu's words *mṛtyuś ca vasati krodhe sarvatejomayo hi saḥ* (7: 11) would have passed quickly from a textual nicety into a frightening reality. From all the pandemonium our *purohita* had a quick means of escape: using a bull made from human bone and uttering the requisite *mantra*, he could jump on a bullock-cart to fly back to his own land![69]

Although interference and sabotage were key parts of the *purohita*'s duties, it was not his only task. In his own country, the Atharvavedic *purohita* had a supervisory role at royal rituals, a position technically known as *brahmán*.[70] We will turn to these royal rituals and those who performed them shortly. For the moment, we only need note that the efficacy of these performances rested on their being executed in a proper fashion. Indeed, every detail had to be perfect. Should the officiants make mistakes or hostile kings and their priests interfere as a way of advancing their own claims, then corrections were needed. The responsibility for these corrections lay with the *brahmán*.[71] He sat to the south of the sacrificial ground, silently overseeing the performance and consenting to its progress. If errors were made by the other priests, he would intervene with expiatory formulae (*prāyaścitta*).[72] The position of the *brahmán* on the south helps explain the *purohita*'s affiliation with Yamarāja because, as we have seen, Yama is the judge who presides over the southern quarter. At times the *purohita* cum *brahmán* recited hymns and participated in the philosophical dialogues (*brahmodya*) that took place during the course of the performance.[73] Potential threats from hostile kings and their agents show why the function of chaplain and statesman were combined: the *purohita*'s work included not only ritual correction but the deployment of chemical weapons and deadly incantations designed to utterly smash those intent on mischief. It was in this way that sacrifice supported the king and the king supported sacrifice. The success of the symbiosis was essential to the imperial formation of the early Gupta kings. As Hopkins concluded more than a century ago: "The true basis of kingly power is the priest's power; of priestly power, the king's power. Their union is perfection."[74]

## 3.3. ṚTVIJ

While the *purohita* was responsible for the correctness of the ritual, his seat at the southern edge of the sacrificial precinct is indicative of his peripheral role as an actual performer. To put the matter another way, the *purohita* was a bona fide priest, but he was supposed to stand apart – he acted only to guarantee and protect the success of the ritual work. The priests under his watchful gaze had much to do however. These priests are three in most enumerations: (1) the Hotṛ who knew the sacred invocations of the *Ṛgveda*, (2) the Udgātṛ who knew the hymns of the *Sāmaveda*, and (3) the Adhvaryu who knew the formulae and manual operations of the *Yajurveda*. Each in turn had three helpers: the Hotṛ was assisted by the Maitrāvaruṇa, Acchāvāka, and Grāvastut; the Udgātṛ was assisted by the Prastotṛ, Pratihartṛ, and Subrahmaṇya; and the Adhvaryu, by the Pratiprasthātṛ, Neṣṭṛ, and Unnetṛ. We have already encountered several of these specialists in a copper-plate charter of Govinda IV.[75] The importance of these priests – however they are named and counted – is shown by the

*Mānavadharmaśāstra*, which instructs the king to appoint a royal chaplain (*purohita*) and sacrificial priests (*ṛtvij*).[76] The priests are to perform the king's domestic rites and the sacrifices for which three fires are required; for these activities the priests should be paid liberal fees. Exactly what was intended by this instruction is clarified in the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*: "For the specific purpose of performing *śrauta* and *smārta* rites he [i.e., the king] should choose *ṛtvij*-s and he should perform sacrifices according to the rules, giving large presents."[77] As the commentary tells us, the word "sacrifices" means the royal consecration (*rājasūya*) and so forth.[78] So it is quite clear who these people were and what they were doing at court. They were, firstly, the cadre of Vedic specialists and their various assistants. And their business, secondly, was the performance of the seven royal Soma sacrifices, the most important of which were the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha*.[79]

The nature of these rituals as described in surviving texts indicates that there would be little material residue (i.e., nothing for the modern archaeologist to discover centuries after the performance). But the Guptas clearly intended their solemn rituals to be spectacular showpieces and great public events. Particularly indicative of the wide advertisement of the rituals are the gold coins of Samudragupta and Kumāragupta that carry images of horses, in some instances tethered to a sacrificial post.[80] The legends on the reverse of Samudragupta's coins read: *aśvamedhaparākramaḥ*, "he who is powerful through the horse-sacrifice."[81] A clay seal, ascribed by Rapson to Samudragupta, also shows a horse tied to a post with a legend below reading: *par*[*ā*]*krama*[*ḥ*].[82] The legends on the coins of Kumāragupta read: *śryaśvamedhamahendraḥ*, "Lord of the glorious horse-sacrifice."[83] Passing from hand to hand, these coins travelled to every part of Gupta realm, their circulation mimicking the horse's unbridled peregrination over the earth before the sacrifice. The use of coins with *aśvamedha* imagery can indeed be read as an attempt to expand the geographical reach of the horse by proxy, and so the territory that the king might claim. Coins also insinuated the authority of the ritual and the king into economic and social realms that would not be touched by a strictly canonical performance.

Brick altars were required at the site of all major sacrifices and some examples have been found, albeit belonging to kings who were in competition with the early Guptas rather than the Guptas themselves.[84] In addition, some sacrificial places were evidently marked by statutes of horses. Several examples survive, the largest and most complete coming from Kharigadh, District Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. On the right side of the neck is an inscription recording that it was the meritorious gift (*deyadhamma*) of Samudragupta.[85] A second horse, belonging to the time of Kumāragupta, was found at Nagwa, a southern suburb of Vārāṇasī.[86] There is another example in central India, not far from Udayagiri (Figure 38). We shall have more to say of this sculpture in due course.

38 Nāgouri (District Vidishā, MP). Stone horse, fourth century.

This archaeological material provides a framework for evaluating the assertion, made in the time of Kumāragupta and Budhagupta, that Samudragupta was the "performer of the horse sacrifice, long decayed" (*cirotsannāśvamedhāharttā*). The epithet implies that Samudragupta commissioned a ritual that had been in abeyance for a substantial period of time. The meaning of the word *cirotsanna-* has drawn some scholarly attention. Fleet's translation was "the restorer of the *aśvamedha*-sacrifice, that had long been in abeyance." Bhandarkar responded to this by quoting a number of inscriptions, unknown in Fleet's time, which show that the sacrifice was not actually in abeyance, at least as far as the king's commissioning inscriptions were concerned.[87] Bhandarkar also cited the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and related passages in the *Taittirīyasaṃhitā*, which show that by the time these works were compiled the *aśvamedha* was regarded as incomplete (*utsanna*). But despite these citations and Bhandarkar's polemical exceptions to Fleet, he was compelled to conclude with him that Samudragupta restored the sacrifice. As an aside, Bhandarkar added that Samudragupta may have been able to achieve a reconstruction of the ritual by garnering Vedic knowledge in the south where the tradition was more complete. This suggestion is anachronistic and palpably perverse: copper-plate charters show, firstly, that the north had viable Vedic schools in the Gupta period unlike modern times and, secondly, that it was actually the southern schools whose textual and ritual

corpora were incomplete. But before taking up these points we need to complete our review of the glosses put forward for *utsanna*.

Departing markedly from Fleet's interpretation, A. B. Keith and V. S. Pathak proposed that *utsanna* meant "elaborate" or "protracted."[88] This was endorsed by Goyal who used the understanding to address the epithet *anekāśvamedhayājin* in the Poona plates of Prabhāvatīguptā. He suggested that "Samudragupta probably performed a few Aśvamedhas of abbreviated form current in that period and latter on, after he had made himself the emperor of almost the whole of India, celebrated a chirotsanna or elaborate horse sacrifice. His successors gave emphasis on the latter while Prabhāvati emphasized the celebration of several Aśvamedhas by her grandfather. Probably she believed that the word aneka will impress the Vākāṭakas, who were proud of the four Aśvamedhas of Pravarasena I, more than the word chirotsanna."[89]

While I would agree that Prabhāvatīguptā's plates describe Samudragupta as a performer of many horse-sacrifices in order to counter the Vākāṭaka tradition that Pravarasena had performed four of these rites, I am unable to sustain the suggestion that *cirotsanna* means "elaborate" or "protracted." Leaving aside for a moment the relevant textual and epigraphic evidence, I would note that this interpretation springs from an old methodological problem in the writing of Indian history. The crux of the matter may be summarised as follows: because Gupta inscriptions say that Samudragupta restored the horse-sacrifice, yet because other inscriptions show the horse-sacrifice was performed repeatedly in the run up to Gupta hegemony, we are obliged either to reject the epigraphic statements as "exaggerated bombast" or invent a new meaning for the word *utsanna*. Because historians are fearful of rejecting inscriptional statements – they provide our only historical data – and because the Guptas represent a paradigmatic high-point in Indian art and culture, it becomes an urgent matter to invent a new meaning for the word *utsanna* as this is the only way to defend the integrity of the sources and high status of the Guptas. There is a simple and obvious exit from this conundrum: inscriptions are not to be read as statements of empirical fact but rather as political rhetoric.

This is not an innovative suggestion. Most historians have accepted this dimension of the epigraphic sources and have accepted additionally that it was only our Victorian predecessors who were obsessed with extracting "the facts" from the sources that might then "speak for themselves." I have pursued these rudimentary issues of historiography here because they lead us directly to the heart of the problem (i.e., the meaning of *utsanna*). This meaning is evident from passages that provide a larger context for the word, a particularly illustrative case being the story of Sunda and Upasunda in the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. Sunda and Upasunda were two demons – sons of Nikumbha and descendants of Hiraṇyakaśipu – who gained great power through penance. They decided to use this power to conquer the universe, in the course of which

they extirpated brāhmaṇas, destroyed hermitages, and suppressed Vedic practice. The havoc culminated with the complete destruction of all ritual as well as economic and agricultural activity:[90]

> siṅhau bhūtvā punar vyāghrau punaś cāntarhitāv ubhau |
> tais tair upāyais tau krūrāv ṛṣīn dṛṣṭvā nijaghnatuḥ || 21
> nivṛttayajñasvādhyāyā praṇaṣṭanṛpatidvijā |
> utsannotsavayajñā ca babhūva vasudhā tadā || 22
> hāhābhūtā bhayārtā ca nivṛttavipaṇāpaṇā |
> nivṛttadevakāryā ca puṇyodvāhavivarjitā || 23
> nivṛttakṛṣigorakṣā vidhvastanagarāśramā |
> asthikaṅkālasaṃkīrṇā bhūr babhūvogradarśanā || 24
> nivṛttapitṛkāryaṃ ca nirvaṣaṭkāramaṅgalam |
> jagat pratibhayākāraṃ duṣprekṣyam abhavat tadā || 25
> candrādityau grahās tārā nakṣatrāṇi divaukasaḥ |
> jagmur viṣādaṃ tat karma dṛṣṭvā sundopasundayoḥ || 26
>
> They became lions and tigers and invisible, and with all kinds of wiles they cruelly slew the seers where they found them. Treasure-filled Earth saw sacrifice and Veda-study halt, kings and brahmins perish, festivals and rituals lapse, buying and selling cease, the worship of the gods stop, and, while she cried out in fear, she was deprived of rites and marriages. And with her ploughing and cattle-tending ended, her cities and hermitages razed, Earth, bestrewn with bones and skeletons, became a loathsome sight. The world where the ancestral offerings had come to an end and no sacrificial calls and hallowing rites were heard, now became of fearful and ugly aspect. Moon and sun, planets, stars, constellations, and all that dwell in the heavens became despondent on watching the works of Sunda and Upasunda.

The world depicted in this passage is one dependant on brāhmaṇas, learning, and the regular performance of Vedic rites. In this teleological framework, agriculture, pastoralism, and trade depend on the proper maintenance of ritual, an arrangement that recalls the landed estates (*agrahāra*) created to support brāhmaṇas from the early Gupta period. The nature and operation of these estates have been explained in Section 2.12. The destruction of this system leads to calamity, the first steps on the road to ruin being the murder of brāhmaṇas, the lapse of sacrifice and Vedic recitation (*nivṛttayajñasvādhyāya*), and the decay of festivals and sacrifices (*utsannotsavayajña*). These phrases show that *utsanna* is an entirely derogatory qualification, especially when applied to *yajña*.

The moral and social dimensions of *utsanna* are illustrated by *Bhagavad Gītā* 1: 40–44. In these verses Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa about the decay of family customs and religious duties. He states: "For men whose family laws have decayed, a place in hell is assured, so we have been told."[91] This wording shows that Arjuna was reporting an opinion that was well-nigh universal. Responsible men of the world were in no doubt: *utsannakuladharma* – the decay of family tradition – leads to perdition. This was a calamity that the ancient Indians sought to resist in a vigorous manner.

Opposite meanings add further insights, the most important antonym of *utsanna* being *pratiṣṭhā*. Gonda has provided examples of this usage.[92] Now the word *pratiṣṭhā*, as discussed at length in Section 2.10, embodied deep concerns in early India about a steadfast support for the universe, the social order, and the individual. That these ideas and this vocabulary were current in Gupta times is demonstrated by the Allahābād pillar inscription. This describes Samudragupta as establishing (*pratiṣṭhā*) dilapidated royal families (*utsannarājavaṃśa*) that had fallen from sovereignty (*bhraṣṭarājya*).[93] Similarly, the Bhitrī pillar inscription, also discussed in Chapter 2, recounts how Skandagupta was able to establish (*pratiṣṭhāpya*) his family after it had begun to falter.[94] Skandagupta used *pracalita* to describe this faltering; to have said *utsanna* in this context would have gone too far and amounted to the inscription serving as the dynasty's epitaph rather than its eulogium.

These textual and epigraphic passages provide some insight into the semantics of *cirotsannāśvamedhāhartṛ*. The claim being made is that although the ritual had decayed over time, it had now been revived thanks to Samudragupta's efforts. And because the horse-sacrifice transformed a king into a paramount emperor, the epithet meant that Samudragupta had attained a level of supremacy unprecedented since antiquity. In comparative terms, the epithet also asserts that the horse-sacrifices of the immediate past were deficient, while the horse-sacrifice of Samudragupta was complete and efficacious. The political implications are clear and important: even though other kings may have sponsored horse-sacrifices, their rites were *utsanna*, and their paramount status accordingly flawed. As an aside and before continuing with the main part of my argument, I should forestall the possible suggestion that *cirotsannāśvamedha* was intended as a technical description (i.e., that Samudragupta performed a rite that was generally understood to be *utsanna* in Gupta times). If the epithet is explained in this fashion, it would mean that while other kings – forerunners and competitors of the Guptas – were proclaiming that they had performed the horse-sacrifice, it was only the Guptas who were prepared to publicly admit that their sacrifice was dilapidated. In the wider context of *praśasti* inscriptions, this is inadmissible: it would have made a mockery of Gupta power and undermined the very purpose of their public eulogies.

Having set aside these several issues, we can turn now to the identity of the kings who were being implicitly disparaged by the term *cirotsannāśvamedhāhartṛ*. Because this was applied retroactively to Samudragupta in the time of Kumāragupta I (circa CE 415–47), we need to seek an understanding of the epithet in the context of fifth-century events rather than those of the fourth. The main political development at this time, as noted by Hans Bakker, was the growing rift between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas.[95] As the influence of Prabhāvatīguptā on the affairs of state waned, the ascendancy of the Guptas in the Deccan was questioned and the Vākāṭakas pursued a more independent policy. Pravarasena II (circa CE 419?–554) began to announce in his inscriptions that he was a devotee of Śiva, a religious declaration that marked an open departure from the Vaiṣṇava cult of the Gupta court.[96] As part of this departure, Pravarasena II records the royal rites and four horse-sacrifices celebrated by his forebear, Pravarasena I (circa CE 275–335).[97] Now because Pravarasena I ruled just prior to Samudragupta (circa CE 350–76), and because the performance of Vedic sacrifices by ancestors was generally used by dynasts to claim high political status for themselves and their lineage, the juxtaposition of *caturaśvamedhayājin* and *cirotsannāśvamedhāhartṛ* can be understood as a "war of words" between Pravarasena II and Kumāragupta I over ancestral precedent rather than any contest that took place in the fourth century. This helps explain, in my view, why Kumāragupta issued coins of the *aśvamedha*-type with the legend *śryaśvamedhamahendraḥ*, "Lord of the glorious horse-sacrifice."[98]

Other Vākāṭaka records, most notably the Siwanī plates, provide a point of entry into the identity of the priests who may have performed the Vedic rites of Pravarasena I. The purpose of the Siwanī charter was to document the gift of a village by Pravarasena II to a preceptor named Devaśarman. He belonged to the Maudgalya *gotra* and is described as an Adhvaryu and Taittirīya.[99] This shows that the Taittirīya school of the *Black Yajurveda* enjoyed significant favour under the Vākāṭakas, Devaśarman's status as a preceptor (*ācārya*) indicating further that he was an important teacher. We will turn to the preceptor's role in due course. Here the main point is that the organisation of information in the charter is such that the Vedic sacrifices of Pravarasena I appear at the beginning of the text. Then, after an account of other Vākāṭaka kings, comes the grant to Devaśarman. Now while no direct claims are made that Taittirīyas served the early Vākāṭaka rulers, the juxtaposition could hardly have passed unnoticed or have been coincidental. Indeed, the repeated and consistent support of Taittirīyas by Pravarasena II underscores the fact that the school was especially strong in the Deccan and enjoyed consistent patronage there. In addition to Taittirīyas, grants were also made to the Vājasaneyins, a closely related school, but this support was limited to judge from surviving plates.[100]

The prevalence of Taittirīyas and Vājasaneyins in the Deccan means, of course, that the textual traditions of these schools were maintained in the region. The texts of the *Yajurveda* and their relative relationships are shown here in Table 2. Focusing on the horse-sacrifice alone, the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and *Taittirīyasaṃhitā*, as Julius Eggeling first noted, describe the *aśvamedha* as *utsanna*.[101] In the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* it is said: "The Saṃkrti is the *Acchāvāka Sāman* – the *aśvamedha* is, as it were, a dilapidated sacrifice, for (who can say) what parts of it are performed and what are not? When the Saṃkṛti is the *Acchāvāka Sāman*, it is for (bringing about) the completeness of the horse (sacrifice)."[102] An identical statement is given in *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* (5: 4: 12: 3).[103] In commentary, Sāyaṇa explains that the *aśvamedha* is known to be a dilapidated sacrifice (*utsannayajña*) because parts (*avayava*) have been either lost (*vinaṣṭa*), conflated (*saṅghāta*), or utterly forgotten (*ativismṛta*). This necessitates the recitation of the *Acchāvāka Sāman*.[104]

These passages show that the Taittirīya and Vājasaneya branches of the *Black Yajurveda* had not preserved the *aśvamedha* in a complete state and furthermore that this was an openly acknowledged fact in the literature of these schools. Of course, Taittirīya and Vājasaneya priests could performed the rite, but they would have been obliged to use expiatory formulae (the *Acchāvāka Sāman*). Now if we assume that the horse-sacrifices of Pravarasena were performed by Taittirīyas, which I think is reasonable on the evidence, then it means that these sacrifices were necessarily *utsanna*. Of course, the Vākāṭakas do not admit this in their charters, but – as just noted – the Guptas raised the issue, implying thereby that their sacrifices were better.

These points have important implications for the history of the priesthood. They suggest, firstly, that the Gupta kings would not have employed Taittirīyas or Vājasaneyins as their sacrificial officiants and, secondly, that they would have sought out priests with a more complete textual and ritual repertoire. Taittirīyas, in any event, seem to have become rather rare in north India by the time of the Guptas, although Vājasaneyins are documented in many places.[105] So the central question that emerges with regard to the Vedic priesthood is this: if the Guptas did not employ Taittirīyas or Vājasaneyins, which school did they call upon to organise their solemn rites?

An answer to this question is provided by an inscription at Eran – the ancient Airikiṇa – not far from Vidiśā and Udayagiri in central India. This shows that among the various schools mentioned in fifth-century records, it was only the Maitrāyaṇīyas of the *Black Yajurveda* who had a relationship with the Guptas. The inscription providing this information is engraved on a pillar set up by *mahārāja* Mātṛviṣṇu in the reign of Budhagupta (circa CE 477–88). In the usual way, Mātṛviṣṇu gives an account of his family going back several generations. At the head of the list is Mātṛviṣṇu's great-grandfather Indraviṣṇu. He is described as "devoted to his religious rites, a performer of

sacrifices, a brāhmaṇa sage learned in Vedic study and a leader of the Maitrāyaṇīyas."[106]

Indraviṣṇu's position in the sacerdotal hierarchy is indicated by the last of these five epithets: *maitrāyaṇīyavṛṣabha* – "leader of the Maitrāyaṇīyas." This shows that Indraviṣṇu was a chief priest of the *Black Yajurveda* (i.e., a priest who served as an Adhvaryu rather than a subordinate like the Pratiprasthātṛ, Neṣṭṛ, or Unnetṛ). Heading a team composed of these pundits and their helpers, Indraviṣṇu would have played a pivotal role as a "hands-on" specialist who prepared the offerings and conducted the ritual action. Now an important distinction is made in the Vedic tradition between the preservation of the Veda through study and recitation (*svādhyāya*) and its actual application in a ritual context (*prayoga*). That Indraviṣṇu was a master of both domains is evident from the other ways he is described: a seer among brāhmaṇas (*viprarṣi*) whose studies were complete (*adhītasvādhyāya*).[107] This means that he had completed his course of Vedic study – the total memorisation of the Yajurvedic hymns and their supplements – and that he was respected for his sagacity in textual matters. The inscription also describes Indraviṣṇu as a performer of sacrifices (*kratuyājin*). This indicates that over and above his textual capacities, Indraviṣṇu was adept in the actual performance of Vedic ritual.

In the ideologically charged context of eulogistic inscriptions, these were not simply factual accounts of Indraviṣṇu's academic brilliance and liturgical diligence. Rather they were dialectical statements of great subtlety and practical importance: their purpose was to advertise the accomplishments of the Maitrāyaṇīyas in the person of Indraviṣṇu and to justify thereby his descendant's claims to privilege and power. Without openly criticising other Vedic schools or making crass comparisons – almost always unacceptable in orthodox rhetoric – the Maitrāyaṇīyas were announcing their encyclopaedic command of Vedic tradition. This confidence was founded squarely on the school and its texts. Although the *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* is closely related to other works of the *Black Yajurveda*, it is at once more archaic and more complete than the other collections, the *brāhmaṇa* portions being, to all appearances, the oldest expository prose in the Sanskrit language.[108] In ancillary literatures, there are two *śrautasūtra*-s, one belonging to the Mānavas, the other to the Vārāhas.[109] The *Mānavaśrautasūtra* is an extensive text with chapters describing the antecedents to the Soma sacrifice, the *agniṣṭoma*, the *pravargya*, the ritual of the *iṣṭi*-s, the building of the fire altar, and the *vājapeya*, *rājasūya*, and *aśvamedha*. In all this, the Maitrāyaṇīyas nowhere describe the *aśvamedha* as *utsanna* – in contradistinction to the Taittirīyas and Vājasaneyins. Indeed, the Maitrāyaṇīyas use the term *utsanna* rarely, one case being to describe the piling up of bricks for the fire ritual where the wording of the relevant passage is the same as *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 5: 3: 1.[110] Otherwise the confident tone of the Maitrāyaṇīyas is reinforced by the frequent assertion *sa siddhaḥ saṃtiṣṭhe*, "it is accomplished

when complete." This is especially noteworthy because the letter *si* which appears on Gupta coins of the *aśvamedha*-type seems to be a *sūtra*-like aphorism based on this very expression.[111] The theme of sacrificial completeness is carried forward in the first *prapāṭhaka* of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, which declares that if the sacrificer thinks of the sacrificial fires as the *ātman* then "the sacrifice becomes full and complete in all its parts."[112]

These considerations take us back to Indraviṣṇu and the Eran inscription. Given that this is dated Gupta year 165 in bright half Āṣāḍha (i.e., July 484), and given also that twenty-six years can be taken as a reasonable time span for each generation in early India, we can safely conclude that Indraviṣṇu flourished in the early years of the fifth century.[113] This means that he was a contemporary of Candragupta II and that he lived in central India when Candragupta passed through the region on campaign. This war – quite apart from its actual military dimensions – was conceived as a ceremonial conquest of the world, as we have seen elsewhere in this book.[114] So Candragupta, as a king with high political and ritual ambitions, would have been drawn to Indraviṣṇu's exceptional learning and to the completeness of the Maitrāyaṇīya tradition. We may even suggest that Candragupta co-opted Indraviṣṇu to his *rājasūya* and its memorialisation at Udayagiri.

This suggestion is rendered less speculative by an important ritual detail in the Maitrāyaṇīya version of the *rājasūya*. As noted in Section 1.11, there are four figures of Varuṇa flanking the Varāha image at Udayagiri (Figure 25). Varuṇa is key in the royal consecration because he is conceived as the personification of the unction fluid. During the rituals that accompany the preparation of the fluid, it is divided into four parts and put into four vessels, acts specifically described in Maitrāyaṇīya and Taittirīya texts.[115] When the time comes for king to be lustrated – the absolute climax of the performance because the king is reborn at that moment and invested with a new body and divine energy – the *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* gives a sacred formula invoking four powers: *dyumna, tejas, indriya, kratu*.[116] Here the Taittirīyas elaborate: *dyumna, tejas, varcas, indriya, vīrya, ojas*.[117] In other words, the Maitrāyaṇīya ritual invests the king with four – and only four – powers. Now because the four Varuṇa images at Udayagiri are shown holding their cups at the ready – as if on the verge of pouring out the contents – we may take the sculptures as a virtual representation of the four powers in the Maitrāyaṇīya *mantra*.[118] Textual corroboration for this interpretation, and thus for a connection between the Guptas and the Maitrāyaṇīya treatment of this ritual moment, is provided by the Allahābād pillar inscription. This records that Samudragupta was "equal to Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra and Yama" (*dhanadavaruṇendrāntakasamasya*).[119] Although the terminology differs, the four deities are related to the components in the Maitrāyaṇīya *mantra*. The word *dyumna*, firstly, generally means strong or powerful, but it also refers to wealth and possessions, a direct equation with *dhana* being made in Yāska's *Naighaṇṭuka*

(2: 10).[120] Secondly, *tejas*. This refers to radiant light, splendour, and brilliance, qualities that can be equated with Varuṇa because he, as the god of the waters, is the embodiment of the unction fluid. As noted in Section 1.11, various ritual idioms in the *rājasūya* are used to combine the power of the sun and moon in the fluid. The radiance of these bodies is then transferred to the king when he receives the *abhiṣeka*. The third term in the unction *mantra* is *indriya*. This embraces ideas of vital power and virility, but its core meaning is the force or power that belongs to or is derived from Indra. The connection with Indra in the Allahābād inscription is thus relatively simple. Finally, *kratu*. This term refers to power, ability, and judgment, the compound *bhadrakratu*, meaning "right judgment," clarifying the core meaning. The link between this and Yama in the Allahābād inscription is close because, as pointed out in our discussion of the *purohita*, Yama is the judge par excellence. These details show that the public representation of Samudragupta in the Allahābād pillar inscription was defined by the powers invested in him during the Maitrāyaṇīya consecration. Thus while *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 4–6) states that the king is constituted from eternal elements extracted from Indra, Vāyu, Yama, Sūrya, Agni, Varuṇa, Candra, and Kubera, the Allahābād inscription reduces the list to Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra, and Yama because these were the actual four invoked at the king's Maitrāyaṇīya consecration.

The suggestion that Maitrāyaṇīya priests were involved in Gupta court ritual from the beginning of Gupta rule is further supported by a second inscription from Eran. This is fragmentary, but portions of the *praśasti* are reasonably well preserved. The king – probably Candragupta I – is praised as surpassing the legendary rulers Pṛthu and Rāghava in the giving of gold.[121] What is being alluded to in these lines is the royal consecration and the horse-sacrifice, Pṛthu having performed the first *aśvamedha* according to several *Purāṇa*-s and his descendant Rāma having continued the tradition according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The point being made is that the Gupta monarch outstripped the ancients through his generous gifts to the priests who performed the Vedic rites. This highlights the important role of the *ṛtvij* but contains no features that are uniquely Maitrāyaṇīya. More telling is the statement that Samudragupta was honoured "with the majesty of royal titles and with besprinkling and so forth."[122] Although this epigraphic statement is very concise, it is possible to understand it in a Maitrāyaṇīya framework. In the *Mānavaśrautasūtra*, the sacrificer is besprinkled at several points, most notably in the *vājapeya* and *rājasūya*. In both cases, the king is announced to be a sovereign lord and his stride and valour declared to be that of Viṣṇu. The text runs as follows:[123]

> samrāḍ asīty āsandyāṃ kṛṣṇājinamāstīrya bastājinaṃ
> paśukāmasya viṣṇoḥ krāntam asi viṣṇor vikrāntam asi
> viṣṇor vikramaṇam asīti yajamānam āsandīṃ prakramayati

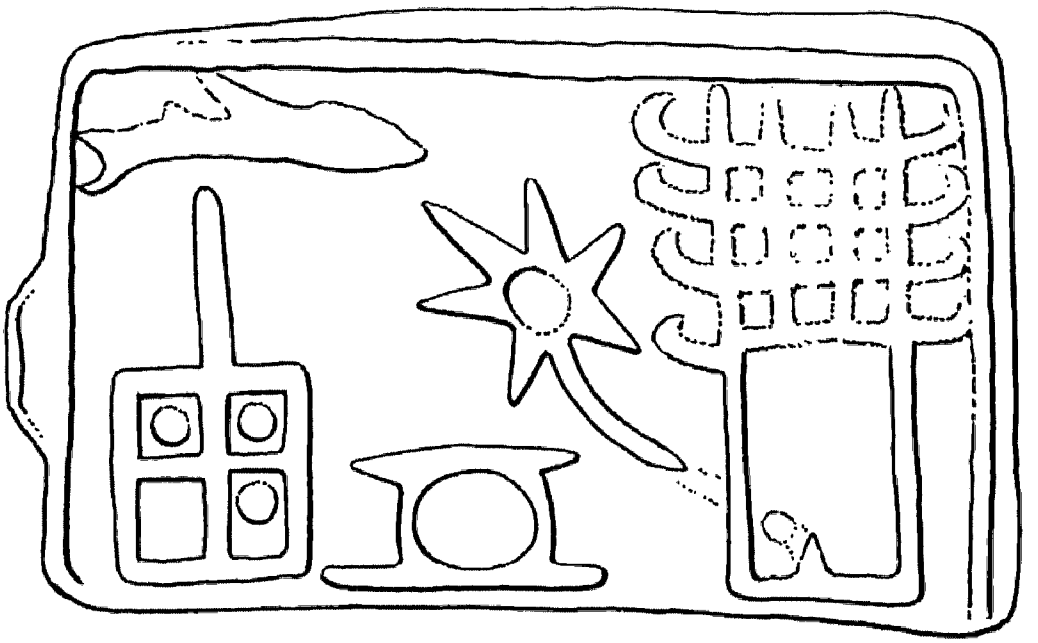
> With: "Thou art the universal ruler" he spreads the black antelope hide on the chair, the goat skin for one desirous of cattle; then he makes the sacrificer step toward the chair with: "Thou art the step of Viṣṇu, thou art the stepping out of Viṣṇu, thou art the stepping over of Viṣṇu."

After the priests have made these statements and issued these instructions, they besprinkle the king with the unction fluid.[124] The point here is that the Eran inscription and Maitrāyaṇīya texts have the same ritual sequence: in both the king is honoured with royal titles and thereafter besprinkled. The inscription uses the naming and besprinkling to designate extended performances because these events were, from the royal and thus the epigraphic perspective, the most significant points of contact between the king and his priests. The besprinkling was crucial as we have just said: it was at that moment that the king was reborn, the unction fluid bestowing, as it were, a new body upon him.

The four special powers invoked by the Maitrāyaṇīya *mantra* also appear in the description of Samudragupta given in the Eran inscription. He is firstly said to be "equal to Dhanada and Antaka in joy and wrath."[125] Dhanada and Antaka are, as we have just seen, the deities Kubera and Yama and correspond to *dyumna* and *kratu* in the *mantra*. Thereafter Samudragupta is declared to be a "Vāsava on earth" and a king of "unthwartable valour."[126] The first of these attributes corresponds to *indriya* in the *mantra* because the epithet Vāsava refers to Indra as the leader of the Vasus. As to "valour," the Sanskrit has *vīrya*, a word meaning "vigour, potency, virility," and so also bodily semen. This is closely related to *tejas*, the final element in the lustration *mantra*, because *tejas* is normally seen as a product of *vīrya* being stored up in the body through the practice of celibacy. In most rituals, and certainly during the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha*, the *yajamāna* was expected to refrain from sexual intercourse throughout the performance. As this meant being celibate for a year, the epithet *aprativāryyavīryyaḥ* is entirely apt.

The lines that follow in the Eran inscription explore the implications of the ritual process and the king's metamorphosis. Samudragupta is firstly described as having Śrī – the goddess of good fortune – coming to his household as a faithful wife, her dowry (*śulka*) being nothing more than the king's manliness and prowess.[127] Śrī brings great wealth, elephants, horses, grain, and many sons and grandsons. So the performance has had the desired effect: the king is invigorated, his virility and worldly power are activated, his family and his prosperity expand. The rite has brought everything for which an ambitious man can hope. In the words of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*: "Now this – to wit the sacrifice – is the self of all beings, of all gods; after its successful consummation the sacrificer prospers in offspring and cattle."[128]

Before leaving Eran, we need to consider the structure to which the inscription may have belonged as this has the potential to tell us something



39 Metal plaque from central India decorated with a gateway and shrine, circa second century CE.

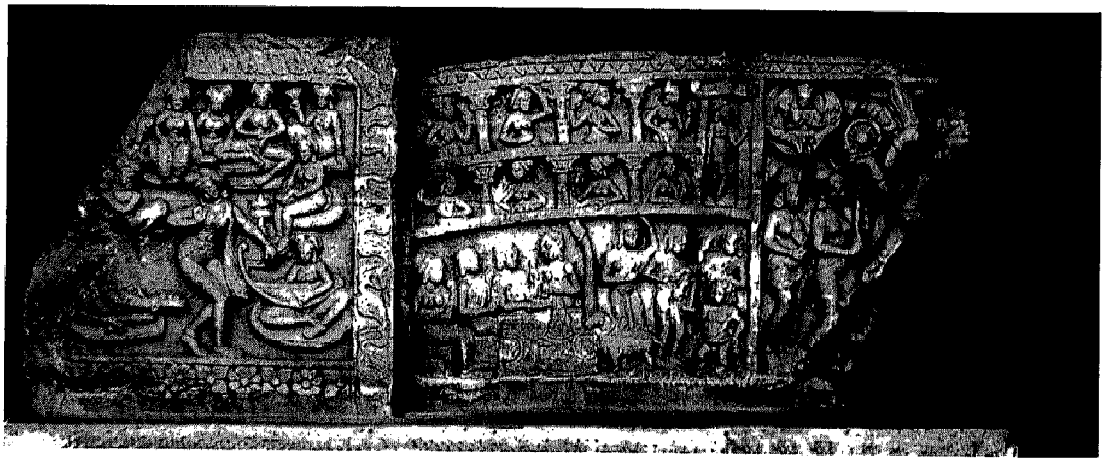
about the Bhāgavata cult during the time of Samudragupta. Cunningham associated the inscription with the colossal four-armed figure of Viṣṇu standing in the ruins of a temple on the site.[129] This suggestion, carried forward by several scholars, can be rejected because the image is much later than the time of Samudragupta.[130] From the epigraphic side, Fleet acknowledged that the slab had the appearance of belonging to a temple, but he would not be drawn: "the lacunae here leave us without any clue as to what was erected and in connection with what form of religion," and further that "the lacunae in this verse render it impossible to say whether here, and below, *sva*, his own, refers to Samudragupta or to some feudatory of his who may have been mentioned."[131]

The situation is perhaps not quite so barren of interpretive possibilities as Fleet supposed. Because the remains at Eran are all Vaiṣṇava, it seems reasonable to suppose that Samudragupta's monument also belonged to that religion. Among the sculptures at the site, however, nothing can be assigned to the fourth century aside from the fragments of two female figures.[132] These were once brackets, the design indicating that a gate akin to those at Sāncht once stood at Eran. Gates of this variety were not exclusively Buddhist. Small metal plaques and other objects from central India often show them (Figure 39).[133] As is clear from the illustration, the multitiered gate marks the entrance to a religious precinct. This is the kind of sacred space that the term *āyatana* designated in the days before stone temples became the norm (i.e., in the time of Samudragupta and his predecessors). The gate has a large lotus sprouting from the threshold. This recalls the lotuses that are carved on the threshold bars at Sāncht and the lotus rhizomes that cover the sides of some of the uprights.

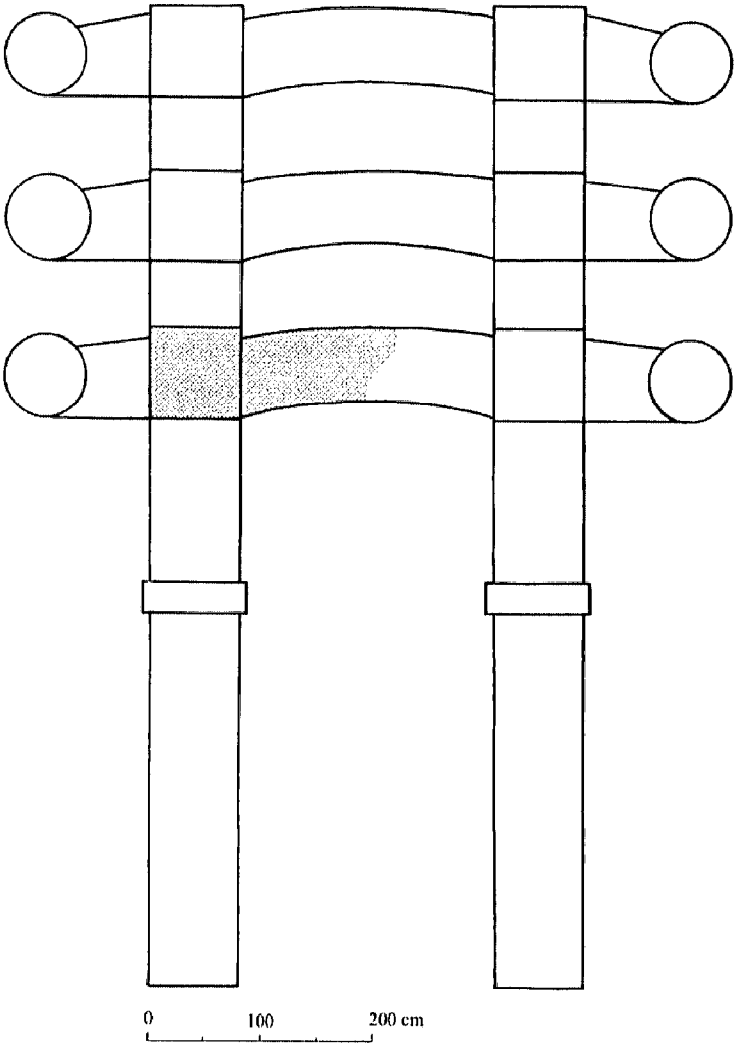
On the plaque, just inside the gate, there is a small altar for offerings. Beside this is a pillar surrounded by a railing, the small circles indicating carved lotus medallions. Again these are not an exclusively Buddhist features, a pillar and railing of this kind having been found at Udayagiri in conjunction with site's old solar cult (Figure 18).[134] While the pillar at Udayagiri was crowned with a lion, the pillar on the plaque carries a fish. This shows that what is being depicted is an *āyatana* dedicated to Viṣṇu in his Matsya or Fish incarnation.

Another gate of the same variety once stood at Pawāyā, the location of the ancient city of Padmāvatī.[135] The largest surviving fragment is shown here with a tentative reconstruction in Figures 40 and 41. That the gate belonged to an early Vaiṣṇava complex is indicated by a broken inscription from the site with an invocation to Viṣṇu.[136] On the lintel itself, the central image shows the well-known story of Viṣṇu as Trivikrama. The narrative climax comes when Viṣṇu assumes cosmic proportions and takes three victorious strides over the whole creation, thereby reclaiming the cosmos for the gods after the demon Bali threatened to become a universal king through the performance of sacrifice. In a manner akin to Varāha's physical absorption of the sacrifice, Trivikrama reiterates the fact that Viṣṇu is the supreme deity who overtakes Vedic ritualism for the benefit of all beings. The representation on the lintel is especially informative because it shows Bali's sacrifice in progress (Figure 40). On the altar there are the three fires required for royal rituals. The texts prescribe that they should be circular, semicircular, and square in shape, and this is how they are shown, although the third hearth is more oval than square. The long-beaked ladles used for making offerings – known as *juhū*, *upabhṛt*, and *dhruva* – are shown with particular accuracy. To one side is the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) with a curved top and cap (*caṣāla*). Below is the sacrificial goat, tethered to the post. To the left, seated on stools, are the *yajamāna* and his wife, the latter an essential participant in the ritual.[137] Each person holds something in his or her hand: this may be *kuśa* grass as the ritual manuals regularly refer to *kuśahasta* as a condition of the participants.[138] Of particular interest for our concerns are the figures standing in the middle. These are the priests responsible for the performance. The Adhvaryu, shown with an assistant or with the Hotṛ, pours clarified butter into the fire with a *sruva*, a small oval spoon made for the purpose. The flames shoot up as he makes the offering. Such performances happened even now: anyone who has witnessed a ritual of this kind cannot fail to be impressed by the pyrotechnic roar of the flames as the priest pours in the ghee to the resounding intonation of *mantra*-s and shouts of *svāhā*.

The Pawāyā lintel gives us the oldest representation of a Vedic performance in India, and its studied correctness shows rather more than a passing knowledge of the ritual and its supporting apparatus. Brockington has noted that the



40 Pawāyā (District Gwalior, MP). Fragment of a gateway showing devotional dance, sacrifice of Bali and Viṣṇu as Trivikrama, fifth century.




41 Pawāyā (District Gwalior, MP). Drawing showing a reconstruction of the gateway and position of surviving fragment.

Vedic elements in the *Mahābhārata* give every appearance of learned brāhmaṇical borrowings from older ritual texts and for this reason might well be assigned to a time when the redactors of the epic were at work.[139] Although he does not say as much, the implication is that these learned borrowings were taking place in the early Gupta period. A range of factors studied in this book point in this direction: it was under the Guptas that the Maitrāyaṇīyas were called upon to reactivate complete Vedic sacrifices for their royal patrons and it was under the Guptas that epic passages, in increasingly correct Sanskrit, were used in copper-plate charters to buttress the king's title to the earth and his right to make grants of land to brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda.[140] It was under Guptas also that theological strategies were elaborated for absorbing and surpassing the sacrifice in the Vaiṣṇava royal cult. The Pawāyā lintel is a visual counterpart of these developments. It looks back with antiquarian precision to the ancient world of sacrifice, and it looks forward with striding confidence to Vaiṣṇava theism and mature Hinduism.

These same trends are expressed, as we have been at pains to show, in the iconographic programme at Udayagiri. Manifestly Vedic material, like that shown on the Pawāyā lintel, is not found at Udayagiri, but remains of this type are found at Nāgouri, a few kilometres to the southwest. Nāgouri is the small hill adjacent to Sānchī that served as a stone quarry for many centuries. Standing unfinished in the quarry is a large sculpture of a horse, evidently an *aśvamedha* memorial like that preserved in Lucknow (Figure 38).[141] Why this horse was left unfinished has not been explained – I suspect it was intended to commemorate Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice but was abandoned at the king's death. However that may be, the impact of the event in the neighbourhood is highlighted by paintings in a nearby rock-shelter. Although the paintings are only partially preserved, a king seated on a throne can be discerned. He is protected by a balloon-like parasol and surrounded by attendants, some of whom may be his priests. Not far away are several scenes with horses. Although the sequence of events is unclear due to damage, the paintings appear to represent a local response to the *aśvamedha* and a royal visitation in connection with the performance.[142]

The sacrificial priests of the Guptas have been somewhat displaced by the wealth of archaeological, epigraphic, and textual detail surveyed in the foregoing pages. This is now the place to summarise the relevant evidence and so bring our discussion of *ṛtvij*-s to a conclusion. The key points are as follows:

- The Eran inscription of Budhagupta documents that the Maitrāyaṇīya school flourished in the Vidiśā region in the early Gupta period and that Indraviṣṇu, its leading representative, was a contemporary of Candragupta II.
- The Eran and Allahābād inscriptions of Samudragupta indicate that the Maitrāyaṇīyas were already active as sacrificial priests in the mid-fourth century and that the early Guptas used their version of the *rājasūya*.

- The literature of the Maitrāyaṇīyas shows that the school had the textual and liturgical potential to perform royal sacrifices, including the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha*.
- The remains at Nāgouri, not far from Udayagiri, show that a horse-sacrifice, or at least parts of it, were performed in central India and that a memorial of the performance was made during Gupta rule. The performance and memorial were supervised, in all likelihood, by Maitrāyaṇīya priests.

## 3.4. MAITRĀYAṆĪYA, MĀNAVA, AND BRĀHMAṆAS IN GUPTA POLITY

The Maitrāyaṇīya biographies in the Eran inscription document how the descendants of Indraviṣṇu abandoned their priestly vocation and assumed responsibility for government. The first move was made by Hariviṣṇu who is said to have been *svavaṃśavṛddhihetu*, "the cause of the expansion of his line." This implies that Hariviṣṇu had become active in political matters. The process continued under Mātṛviṣṇu, in whose time the inscription was made. Apparently aware that priests did not normally serve as kings, Mātṛviṣṇu attributed the change to divine providence: he was "on the creator's wish, approached by the goddess of sovereignty, as if by a maiden choosing a husband of her own accord."[143]

The priests at Eran were not alone in taking up positions of power, whatever the reason or explanation. Indeed a review of the epigraphic records shows that many important people in the Gupta hierarchy came from brāhmaṇa stock. The Parivrājaka rulers in the Vindhyas provide a striking example. In one of their charters, they state that the Parivrājaka lineage was founded by Suśarman of the Bharādvāja *gotra*. The termination – *śarman* in the name leaves no doubt about the caste of the Parivrājakas.[144] Just as the Eran inscription had high praise for Indraviṣṇu, so Suśarman is described as an impressive and learned man: he was a great seer akin to Kapila (*kapilasyeva maharṣeḥ*) whose supreme treasure was known to be the fourteen branches of knowledge (*caturddaśa-vidyāsthānaviditaparamārthasya*).[145] The number of kings in the Parivrājaka line suggests that Suśarman flourished in the third quarter of the fourth century (i.e., late in the reign of Samudragupta). By the end of the fifth century, the Parivrājakas were well established in government.

The Sanakānikas mentioned in the Cave 6 inscription at Udayagiri also seem to have been brāhmaṇas. The first of these kings was one *mahārāja* Chagalaga. A long-standing assumption about this name has been that it has a "Turkī look" and that the Sanakānikas were some kind of tribe or clan because they are coupled with the Mālavas and Yaudheyas in the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta.[146] This has prompted commentators to describe the Sanakānikas as a frontier people who were brought under the sway of Gupta civilisation by

Samudragupta. These assumptions led Williams to judge Cave 6 and its sculpture as "parochial" and to suppose that the sculptor "was a local man like his patron, conceivably himself of tribal origin, who followed the lead of the center of empire."[147] Aside from the problematic constitution of tribes in ancient India – they have been viewed through the distorting lens of the scheduled tribes and castes in modern legislation – the entire edifice of these propositions is unsound.[148] We have already noted that Viṣṇudāsa, the second *mahārāja* in the Udayagiri inscription, was a significant figure in the early Gupta period, known from literary sources and seals.[149] And there is no evidence otherwise for bumpkins in the Udayagiri inscription: *chagala* and *chāgala* are perfectly good Sanskrit even if Chagalaga is not a dictionary word. According to the *Caraṇavyūha* the Chāgaleyas were Taittirīyas of the *Black Yajurveda*; a fragment of the lost *Chāgaleyabrāhmaṇa* is quoted in the *Baudhāyanaśrautasūtra*.[150] The school also produced the *Chāgaleyasmṛti*.[151] By analogy with the Maitrāyaṇīyas and Parivrājakas, we may suppose that the Sanakānikas were Taittirīyas who found their way into government in the course of the fourth century. As for the name Sanakānika, it is a diminutive of Sanaka, a Vedic seer known from several sources. Names formed in this way were not uncommon, examples being found in the *Raghuvaṃśa* and elsewhere.[152] A link between Sanaka and Udayagiri is provided by the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 4: 10), which states that Sanaka eulogised Varāha. The point, of course, is that the cave-shrine of the Sanakānikas is directly adjacent to the Varāha panel at Udayagiri and the inscription at the cave describes the Sanakānika *mahārāja* as meditating on the feet of Candragupta, the emperor who, as explained in Section 1.8, metaphorically assumed the form of Varāha.

Brāhmaṇas also controlled positions of considerable power at the Gupta court itself. The Karamḍaṇḍā inscription, for example, records that Pṛthivīṣeṇa served as a personal advisor to Kumāragupta II and rose to be a Great Commander (*mahābalādhikṛta*), a military position of ministerial rank. In giving an account of his forebears, Pṛthivīṣeṇa reveals that he belonged to Aśvavājin *gotra* and was descended from a brāhmaṇa who knew the *Sāmaveda*.[153]

The prevalence of brāhmaṇas in the political hierarchy raises the contentious issue of the Gupta's own caste affiliation. Goyal reviewed earlier opinions on the matter and made a polemical case for the Guptas as brāhmaṇas.[154] This view has enjoyed some currency, but has been critiqued by Hans Bakker, who has remarked that "the *gotra* of the Guptas, if any, is unknown, since it is never mentioned in their own inscriptions, indicating their humble origins."[155] While it is certainly true that there are no inscriptions naming the *gotra* or *varṇa* of the Gupta family, there are some indications that the Guptas were indeed brāhmaṇas. The most immediate is their intermarriage with the Nāgas, a powerful network of brāhmaṇa families. After Samudragupta suppressed these families in the fourth century, one of the Nāga princesses, Kuberanāgā, was

brought to court and given in marriage to Samudragupta's son Candragupta II. This reconstruction of events is based on Bakker's new reading of verse 5 of the Kevala Narasiṃhā temple inscription.[156] This tells us nothing about the caste of the Nāgas, but Kuberanāgā's daughter Prabhāvatīguptā issued copper-plates in which it is recorded that she, or at least her parents, belonged to the Dhāraṇa *gotra*.[157] That this was a brāhmaṇa *gotra* in Gupta times is shown by the Kurud plates of the Śarabhapurīya dynasty that record a grant to an individual named Bhāśrutasvāmin of the Dhāraṇa *gotra*.[158] As noted by Sircar and endorsed by Bakker, these inscriptions indicate that women could retain their family *gotra* after marriage in contradistinction to modern practice.[159] Now this evidence can be interpreted in two ways. It might be said that Prabhāvatīguptā's mention of the Dhāraṇa *gotra* in her charters indicates that the Guptas were brāhmaṇas and that Nāga intermarriage with them was unproblematic. Alternately, it could be argued that the Gupta's were of humble origin and that Prabhāvatīguptā retained the *gotra* as a token of her family's high status – even though she herself was half Gupta by birth and thus not a brāhmaṇa by normal standards.

Similar problems surround the Kadamba kings of Karṇāṭaka. The Tāḷagunda inscription records that Mayūraśarman was a learned sage who travelled to Kāñcī with his *guru* to complete his studies. Exasperated by the treatment he received there at the hands of the Pallavas, he resolved to set up a kingdom of his own. Mayūraśarman's successor Kākusthavarman subsequently gave his daughters in marriage to the Guptas and other royal princes.[160] Given that the Kadambas openly declared that they were brāhmaṇas and made this the historical basis for the establishment of their dynasty, it would seem contradictory for them to have intermarried with a non-brāhmaṇa family. But again the evidence may be construed in two ways. It might show that the Guptas were brāhmaṇas and that intermarriage with them was appropriate and desirable. Alternately it might show that whatever the marriage rules may have been in those days, there was an urgent need to build an alliance with the Guptas, even if they were low-caste upstarts. Offering a daughter in marriage would have been a small and innocuous price to pay for a powerful alliance.

That the first interpretation of this evidence is probably correct, for the Nāgas and Kadambas both, is shown by Parivrājaka inscriptions. As already noted, these document that the first Parivrājaka king was Suśarman, a brāhmaṇa of the Bharādvāja *gotra*. The charters describe him as a "great seer" (*maharṣi*) and "an ascetic who was a ruler of men" (*nṛpatiparivrājaka*). Fleet noted that this terminology puts Suśarman in the same class as the royal saints or *rājarṣi*. Fleet also drew attention to the fact that Candragupta II is described as *rājādhirājarṣi* – the supreme king of royal saints – in the Cave 8 inscription at Udayagiri.[161] The concept appears again in the Kevala Narasiṃha inscription where Samudragupta is titled *rājarṣi*.[162] If we accept the method outlined in Section 2.12, namely that subordinate kings followed the imperial centre in

matters of protocol, then if the Guptas called themselves *rājarṣi* and *rājādhirājarṣi* and if brāhmaṇas serving as their subordinates called themselves *maharṣi* and *viprarṣi*, the Guptas must have been signalling, though the use of these epithets, that they themselves were brāhmaṇas.

Based on the information given so far, it is possible to suggest – reasonably I think – that the Guptas pushed forward their programme of political, social, and economic expansion using a network of fellow brāhmaṇas. That the Guptas chose to avoid public declarations of caste seems related to their role as *paramabhāgavata* – the supreme leader of the Vaiṣṇava faithful. We explained this role in Section 1.11. Just as Lord Viṣṇu stepped over the whole creation as Trivikrama, taking everything and everybody in his stride, so the Guptas sought to establish authoritative and universal dominion over all their subjects and territories. In pursuing this ambition, declarations of origin would have represented a particularisation of identity and localisation of power that would have impeded Gupta efforts to control the Indian subcontinent, a region of remarkable social, linguistic, and cultural diversity – if not fractious competition – from very early times.

Before turning to the historical implications of priests in government, we need to examine the sources that appear to contradict our suggestion that the Guptas were brāhmaṇas. These sources are varied and confusing, but have as a common thread the story of the Nandas and their downfall at the hands of Cāṇakya Kauṭilya and Candragupta. The texts no doubt reflect historical memories of the third century BCE and the Mauryan dynasty, memories that were fairly active and continuous to judge from Pāli works. The *Milindapañho* refers to the clash between the Nandas on one side and Candragupta and Cāṇakya on the other, indicating that a version of this story circulated widely in the early centuries CE.[163] Slightly later Candragupta reappears in the *Mahāvaṃśa*. There he is represented as a Śākya and thus a kṣatriya. According to this version of events – invented to show that the Mauryas were descended from the Buddha's clan – some of the Śākyas were driven into the Himālayas in the time of the Buddha, settling finally in a place full of peacocks (*mayūra*). For this reason they took the name Moriya. Candragupta belonged to this clan, but was born in Pāṭaliputra because his mother sought refuge there at her husband's death. She gave birth near a cow-pen where the baby was protected by a bull named Candra. This is how he came to be called Candragupta.[164] Jaina sources offer a different tale. Hemacandra, in the eighth chapter of his *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, speaks of Candragupta as coming from Mayūraposaka, the village where the royal peacocks of the Nanda house were reared. This version also tells how the woman pregnant with Candragupta was induced by Cāṇakya to "drink the moon," a fact that explains his name.[165]

The story of the Nandas and their downfall at the hands of Cāṇakya Kauṭilya and Candragupta was also known at the Gupta court. Kāmandaki opens the

*Nītisāra* with a reference to it, as noted in Section 3.1, and Viśākhadatta makes the conflict the centrepiece of the *Mudrārākṣasa*. We used this play in Chapter 1 to explain the astronomical symbolism of the Gupta court and the political dimensions of the Varāha incarnation. Viśākhadatta avoids peacocks as an explanatory device for the name Maurya but introduces his own contrivances to counter – and perhaps parody – the fanciful etymologies of the texts cited so far. He thus relates that the king of Pāṭaliputra had two wives, Sunandā – a woman of kṣatriya descent – and Murā – the daughter of a chariot-driver. Murā gave birth to a son who, in his turn, had a hundred sons. The last of these was Candragupta.[166] Because his grandmother was named Murā, Candragupta was called Maurya. In devising this story, Viśākhadatta would have surely known that the correct matronymic of Murā is Maureya, and thus that the name Murā does not really explain Maurya or Moriya. Slightly fudged explanations of this kind abound in Sanskrit writing. In the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra*, for example, the name Nārāyaṇa is explained as follows: *āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai narasūnavaḥ | tā yad asyāyanaṃ pūrvaṃ tena nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ* (1: 10), "The waters are called Nāra, for the waters are, indeed, the offspring of Nara; as they were his first residence (*ayana*), he thence is named Nārāyaṇa."[167] This holds no more water than the peacocks in the *Mahāvaṃśa* or Murā in the *Mudrārākṣasa*.

The problem here is neither the grammatical correctness nor historical veracity of our sources, but what modern commentators have come to expect from them. Some historians, informed by a delightfully naive literalism, have attempted to extract "kernels of factual truth" from these quasi-historical narratives. This may yield homogenised accounts suitable for schoolboys, but the texts are rather more rhetorical in their purpose and sophisticated in their literary structure than the classroom setting will allow. Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu texts look back to the Mauryan period as a great imperial age and arrange memories of it according to their particular agendas. These agendas determined what was possible and what was not, and what kind of lessons could and should be drawn from historical precedent. So the key question is not whether Candragupta's grandmother was really named Murā, but what Viśākhadatta is trying to prove by asserting that this was so. What seems especially curious is that Murā is said to be the daughter of a chariot-driver (*sūta*), a vocation normally reserved for śūdras. This appears to defame Candragupta in a very direct manner – especially if he came from brāhmaṇa stock – until we remember that the world's most famous chariot-driver was Lord Kṛṣṇa. Every informed person watching or reading the *Mudrārākṣasa* would have known the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the role Kṛṣṇa played as Arjuna's chariot-driver and religious guide. They would have known too that the Gupta king ruled as the supreme devotee of Viṣṇu and that the king's public personality was constructed by drawing parallels between current events and the life-stories of Viṣṇu in his several

incarnations. This included Kṛṣṇa, as pointed out in Chapter 1. Here we only need recall that Skandagupta described himself as approaching "his mother with his eyes full of tears, just as Kṛṣṇa did Devakī when he had slain his foe (i.e., his uncle Kaṃsa)."[168] So when Viśākhadatta suggests that Candragupta was descended from a chariot-driver, he was furthering the royal Vaiṣṇava agenda through the medium of his play – and this against the Buddhist view of Candragupta as a Śākya and, by inference, a Buddhist. Simultaneously, Viśākhadatta's Murā reiterated that Candragupta was a Maurya, the dynasty whose imperial power the Guptas sought to appropriate by analogy and studied anachronism.[169] And Murā placed Candragupta in a family of chariot-drivers, a role that Lord Kṛṣṇa himself had deigned to fill. Moreover descent from Murā suggested a link to Viṣṇu through Kṛṣṇa's epithet Murāri, the "enemy of the demon Mura" – a homophonic connection that readers of the *Mudrārākṣasa* could hardly have missed. The epithet is based on stories in the *Harivaṃśa* and *Vāmana Purāṇa*, which describe how Kṛṣṇa destroyed Mura, liberating him from his demonic body.[170] The point is that death at the hands of god expiates all sin and is a great blessing. This allows a new life to begin: as we know from the *Gītā*, Viṣṇu's intervention sweeps away every moral obscuration and social distinction.[171] The Gupta king, having encountered Viṣṇu as his supreme devotee, was liberated from his personal history and, through the reconstitutive rite of consecration, also conceived theistically as Viṣṇu, was able to rebuild himself according to a new measure – just as the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* indeed describes.[172]

However the Guptas may have distanced themselves from their social origins, the migration of priests from the world of learning to the mundane concerns of government was a problematic matter that called for interpretive intervention. Texts and inscriptions put forward a number of apologies for the change, but the overarching framework was the *yuga*-theory, the well-known system of ages set out in a number of sources but most famously and formatively in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (1: 81–86).[173] This outlines the historical idea that the conditions of life steadily worsen over time. In the halcyon days of *kṛtayuga* – a kind of golden age – disease was unknown, everyone lived to a tremendous age and desires were instantaneously realised. As time ticked by, however, morality and the length of life began to decline. This change in circumstances called for different types of action. In the third age – *dvāparayuga* – sacrifices were needed to keep the creation steady through binding correspondences between heaven and earth. In *kaliyuga* – the dark age inaugurated by the horrible war at the end of the *Mahābhārata* – gift-making, government, and other vulgar activities become necessary. Although everything according to this schema is destined to go from bad to worse, the possibility of effective rear-guard action is normally admitted. Thus, the Vākāṭaka charters of Pravarasena II speak of the king's restoration of the "golden age" through the grace of Lord Śiva.[174] The

Tāḷagunda inscription is rather more militant. We have already noted how this describes the treatment that Mayūraśarman had to endure at the Pallava court and his subsequent decision to take up the sword. Quite exceptionally, Mayūraśarman's motivations are recorded in a direct quote. From this we learn that he regarded his problems as symptomatic of the Kali age and its squalid conditions:[175]

> tatra pallavāśvasaṃsthena kalahena tīvreṇa roṣitaḥ [|*]
> kaliyuge ['*]sminn aho bata kṣatrāt paripelavā vipratā yataḥ [|| 11*]
> gurukulāni samyag ārāddhya śākhām adhītyāpi yatnataḥ ||*]
> brahmasiddhir yyadi nṛpādhīnā kim ataḥ paraṃ du[ḥ*]kham ity
> ataḥ [|| 12*]
>
> There (at Kāñcī) enraged by a fierce quarrel at the completion of the Pallava horse-sacrifice, [Mayūraśarman reflected]: "Alas! In this Kali age brāhmaṇas should be so much feebler than the kṣatriyas! For if the fortune of a brāhmaṇa who has earnestly studied his branch of the Veda and duly served his preceptor's family is dependant on a king – what can be more painful than this?"

Because brāhmaṇas were responsible for articulating the *yuga* cosmology and because government was ultimately derived from sacrifice, it could be argued that government was nothing but ritual action appropriate to the moment.[176] In this intellectual climate, it is not surprising that the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* allows brāhmaṇas to take the law into their own hands:[177]

> śastraṃ dvijātibhir grāhyaṃ dharmo yatroparudhyate |
> dvijātīnāṃ ca varṇānāṃ viplave kālakārite || 8: 348
>
> The twice-born may wield arms when the *dharma* is threatened and in times when there is a violation of the twice-born castes.

The question appears again in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (12: 100) where brāhmaṇas are allowed sweeping political powers, not simply presented with a political option in pressing times.

> senāpatyaṃ ca rājyaṃ ca daṇḍanetṛtvam eva ca |
> sarvalokādhipatyaṃ ca vedaśāstravid arhati || 12: 100
>
> The knower of Vedic *śāstra* is fit for generalship, sovereignty and judicature, even overlordship of the whole world.

Situating these statements historically brings us to the controversies that surround the formation and dating of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*. Bühler first suggested that the text was a recast versification of an older *dharmasūtra* of the Mānava *sūtracaraṇa* of the Maitrāyaṇīyas.[178] While this proposal was discounted on the grounds of content by Kane, the origin of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* in the Maitrāyaṇīya school – if not the Mānava *caraṇa* – remains undisturbed.[179] The

Maitrāyaṇīyas designated many of their works *mānava*, even their *saṃhitā* being named *maitrāyaṇīyamānava* in manuscript copies of the text. Precisely when the Maitrāyaṇīyas composed the law-book is a separate problem, but Patrick Olivelle's studies of the vocabulary have demonstrated that the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* depends on the *Arthaśāstra* in matters of criminal and civil law.[180] The *Arthaśāstra* therefore predates the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*. Now in Section 1.10 we have cited the evidence that shows the *Arthaśāstra* was compiled in the circa mid-fourth century. The *Mānavadharmaśāstra* must, as a consequence, be coeval or subsequent to that time.[181] This chronological position is confirmed by the earliest citations of Manu. The first direct quotation appears in the writing of Śabara, the celebrated Mīmāṃsaka commentator who flourished in the late fourth or early fifth century.[182] After that, the first dated epigraphic reference to Manu as an eminent authority is given in a copper-plate charter of CE 571–72.[183] This evidence indicates, firstly, that the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* was composed in the mid- to late fourth century and, secondly, that it had become a respected legal work by the late sixth century. Even if the text was composed at an earlier time, the active life of the *śāstra* as an authoritative work in law can be said to have started only when it was cited. As these citations begin in Gupta times, the de facto textual first-life of Manu may be safely regarded as Gupta. This is confirmed by Telang's observation, made many years ago and valid as ever, that Kālidāsa's references to Manu show that the latter predates the late fourth century, the likely time of Kālidāsa.[184]

This chronological horizon helps explain why the author (or authors) of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* sought to justify the involvement of priests in political matters. The date is reasonably close to the time of the Maitrāyaṇīyas at Eran and overlaps directly with the migration of the Parivrājakas, Kadambas, and others into governmental affairs. If the Guptas themselves were brāhmaṇas as we think, then explaining priests in government would have been an urgent matter for the Maitrāyaṇīyas, the verses cited earlier being all but a direct apology for the behaviour of their royal patrons – not to mention their own Vedic compatriots. This understanding is fortified by close parallels between Gupta-period inscriptions and the text of Manu. Thus, for example, Mayūraśarman is recorded to have assumed the role of a general (*senāpati*), while Manu allows brāhmaṇas to assume generalship (*senāpatya*).[185] At the imperial level, the Guptas set about conquering the entire earth (*kṛtsnapṛthivījaya*) in order to claim absolute sovereignty (*sārvabhauma*), while Manu allows brāhmaṇas to assume overlordship of the regions (*sarvalokādhipatya*). This is a position tantamount to that of a universal king or *cakravartin*.[186]

Gupta patronage of the Maitrāyaṇīya school also explains why the teachings of Manu conform to the Gupta position on land-tenure and the constitution of the king's body, themes explored elsewhere in this volume.[187] Furthermore, the

special relationship between the Maitrāyaṇīyas and Guptas explains the success of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* and its influence on other legal works of the age. Both the *Viṣṇusmṛti* and *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* show the impact of Manu, many passages being verbatim or near-verbatim borrowing from the parent text.[188] Now because these texts emerged from schools of the *Black Yajurveda* (the relationships are shown in Table 2), copper-plates recording donations of land to members of these schools will indicate where the borrowings took place and where the texts were first circulated. Beginning with the Kāṭhakas, epigraphic data and statements in the *Viṣṇusmṛti* indicate that members of the Kāṭhaka school were settled in the Vindhyas in the late fifth century, although this was not their core area of residence and influence.[189] This suggests that the *Viṣṇusmṛti* – in a recension rather more archaic than the one now available to us – was known to the Parivrājakas and Uccakalpas. Copper-plates also show that the Vājasaneyins were settled in the Vindhyas at the same time, not to mention Gujarāt, the Deccan, Andhra, and eastern India. These grants can be understood to show that an early version of the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* was known in the courts that issued the grants.

The Māliā copper-plates demonstrate that there was a substantive link between land-grants and *smṛti*-texts. As already noted, the Māliā plates provide the first securely dated reference to Manu's law-code. They also document the active use of *dharma*-texts in the Maitraka court: King Droṇasiṃha, the charter states, was "a veritable Dharmarāja, whose laws were the rules and ordinances instituted by Manu and other sages."[190] The point, rather obviously, is that Droṇasiṃha – or any other king – could not have governed according to Manu and the other sages without experts on Manu and the other sages in his service. So although the law-codes first emerged in the Vedic schools – and some like those of the Taittīriyas remained closely tied to their original setting – royal patronage in the Gupta period encouraged the development of specialists and a free-standing legal tradition. Because the redactors of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* were Maitrāyaṇīyas and because this school enjoyed a privileged position under the Guptas, it was only natural that Manu's *dharma* was held in high regard, that it had great influence, and that it was especially universal in its legal ambitions. Just as the Guptas sought to create an imperial formation that embraced all of India, so the Maitrāyaṇīyas sought to produce a definitive legal work that supported the political edifice of their patrons and advanced their own position as authorities in law. At several points in this book we have noted that subordinate kings followed the Gupta court in matters of administration and protocol. The pundits who served as legal experts in subordinate courts would have been equally attentive to developments at the centre. In legal matters, as in all else, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. As the Śāstric dictum puts it: "what is not stated in one's own *śākhā* may be taken from others, if it is not found to be contradictory."[191]

## 3.5. PŪRVA MĪMĀṂSĀ AND ŚABARA

The redactors of the Indian law texts could borrow from each other and freely cite parallel but seemingly contradictory passages because they interpreted precedent according to the theory of *ekavākyatā* – all sages are in harmony.[192] The same ideas informed Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, one of the most important systems of Indian thought. This system emerged as a synthetic hermeneutic drawing on all the Vedic schools – a priori it sought to preserve the Vedic tradition in terms of its texts and their ritual application. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā was thus a school that all Vedic brāhmaṇas would have supported and endorsed: its purpose was to defend and extend the interests of the Vedic ritualist and his work (i.e., the domestic rites of the *gṛhya*-texts and the solemn public-rites of the *śrauta*-texts).

The key Mīmāṃsaka work is Jaimini's *Karmamīmāṃsāsūtra*, the "Aphorisms for the Enquiry into the Act." Its scope is outlined in the opening aphorisms: "In consequence [of the earlier study of the Veda] there arises therefore the desire of knowing the *dharma*" (1: 1: 1) and "The *dharma* is the meaningful purpose defined by the urging [of the Veda]" (1: 1: 2).[193] These assertions show that *dharma* was understood by Jaimini to embrace those actions that are prescribed, or can be construed as being prescribed, by the Vedic corpus. These actions did not include everyday activities. Rather, they were actions of a ritual nature. The restricted nature of these concerns has been ably summarised by J. A. B. van Buitenen:[194]

> Jaimini is not concerned with actions whose consequences are predictable from experience, but with the ritual acts that are declared to have a reward totally unpredictable by any other means than Vedic statement. For example, there is the Injunction that "he who desires heaven should sacrifice with the *jyotiṣṭoma* rite." Now there is nothing in our experience or any further knowledge we may gather from sensory perception or deduction that can validly convey to us that through the performance of a specific variant of the Soma sacrifice a person will attain heaven (itself a super-sensory goal), if he so desires. It is therefore in such self-validating injunctions to a course of ritual action that revelation ultimately resides. This characteristic of revelation puts stringent limitations on its authority and its scope: all validity lies in Injunction, which has Vedic ritual as its scope.

Statements about the authority and scope of the Veda are made frequently in early Sanskrit sources, but that in *Āpastambadharmasūtra* (2: 23: 10) can be taken as usefully representative: "It is the firm view of the most eminent scholars of the triple Veda, however, that the Vedas are the ultimate authority. The rites – using rice, barley, animals, ghee, milk, and potsherds, and involving the participation of the wife – that are prescribed in the Veda must be performed with the loud and soft recitation of ritual formulae they hold, and any practice

opposed to those rites is devoid of authority."[195] This assertion underlines the absolute primacy of Vedic authority, a crucial starting point for all Vedic pundits and their Mīmāṃsaka advocates. This passage also reveals – no doubt inadvertently – that Vedic authority was being called into question. The "practices opposed to those rites" are not identified in this *sūtra*-text, but the commentary of Śabara, the oldest surviving on Jaimini, soon reveals the nature of the enemy.

Śabara's commentary, called *Śabarabhāṣya* or *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya*, holds pride of place in the Mīmāṃsaka system insofar as Śabara's understanding of Jaimini was accepted as definitive by subsequent writers like Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Medhātithi. Śabara's views on the nature of language, speech, and reality have been discussed with great scholarship and accuracy in India and the west. Śabara's date has also been carefully scrutinised, all authorities agreeing that he flourished in the late fourth or early fifth century CE.[196] He seems to have lived somewhere in the north where Mīmāṃsā was stronger than in the south. Little about Śabara is otherwise known, but the commentarial literature records that he was a member of the Maitrāyaṇīya school.[197] This detail has drawn little attention to date, but given what has been said about the Maitrāyaṇīyas so far in this book, the importance of this fact should be fairly apparent. Because the Maitrāyaṇīyas served as sacrificial priests to the early Guptas – as noted in Section 3.3 – it is especially noteworthy that the leading commentary on Jaimini should have emerged from the pen of a Maitrāyaṇīya exegete at a time when the school was enjoying a special place under the Gupta kings. Just as the Maitrāyaṇīyas aimed to create a pre-eminent legal text in the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, so also Śabara attempted to establish a definitive system for interpreting Vedic ritual.

Śabara's purpose was to expound a comprehensive rationale for the rituals sanctioned by the Vedas. In the course of this exercise, he examines the popular understanding of the gods in *Devatādhikaraṇa* (9: 1: 5: 6–9). The gods are generally described, Śabara says, as having material bodies, as eating food in the form of offerings, as owning wealth, as being actually pleased by what is offered to them, and as rewarding worshippers with the fruit they desire.[198] These statements show that Śabara was fully aware of the increasing popularity of image veneration and the endowments that were being established to maintain the *pūjā*-cult. To put the matter in concrete historical terms, Śabara was very much alive to the religious, economic, and social activities documented by the copper-plate charters – those things described at length in Chapter 2. The amount of attention Śabara gives to these issues is indicative of the ways in which the new cults were seen by him as eroding the centrality of Vedic worship. For Śabara this was anathema. In the name of the Vedic tradition, he was determined to demolish, in detail and with finality, the operative assumptions of *pūjā*. For the historian of temples in the Gupta period, Śabara's

attempt to nullify the premises on which the existence of temples rested is not without interest.

Śabara deals with the gods in a detailed manner, attacking their alleged corporeality, their supposed consumption of offerings, and their apparent ownership of wealth. Here I will deal with these issues point by point, rephrasing the relevant arguments in a modern style for the sake of historical clarity. It should be noted at the outset that Śabara does not target temples and temple-gods in a direct fashion. His main preoccupation appears to have been with the Vedic schools that had begun to incorporate image-worship into their ritual repertoire. Developments of this kind, as noted in Section 2.10, were attached to the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*. Similar forms of worship also appear in other Vedic supplements, such as the *Skandayāga*, as discussed in Section 3.1. Śabara's first concern seems to have been with the assumptions being made by the practitioners of these and related rites. Of course, he does not name or denigrate any Vedic text or school, his overarching aim being to strengthen the authority of Vedism. Our view is that Śabara sought to correct what he understood to be misconceptions within the Vedic fold; once these were addressed, the larger problems connected with image worship would be resolved by default.[199]

- *Material bodies of the gods.* A cornerstone of Śabara's argument is that the gods do not have material bodies like human beings. As shown in Section 2.8, this was an essential feature of the *pūjā* cult: because the gods are like human beings, more specifically like brāhmaṇas, they merit veneration and support like great men. To counter these notions, Śabara appeals to *mantra*- and *arthavāda*-texts upon which subsequent literature and custom necessarily depend for authority. Citing Vedic statements that seem to show that the gods have bodies – for example, "O Indra, I take your right hand" – Śabara argues that this does not mean that Indra has a body. This is proven by the simple fact that the offerings made to Indra and other gods do not perceptibly diminish in size when the offering is made.[200] So the statements about Indra and the other gods are either absurdities or eulogistic declarations.[201] Of course, they must be the latter because Śabara is not Richard Dawkins. Śabara acknowledges that the frequent use of vocatives in the Veda – the example of Indra just cited will serve – seem to be invocations. This would appear to show that the Vedas advocate the summoning of living entities before the worshipper. On this point, Śabara argues that a god can only be invoked for the purpose of speaking to him, but because there is no recognised means whereby one might speak to a god, and no Vedic evidence that this ever happened, the process of innovation is necessarily useless.[202] Thus the vocatives in the Vedic texts can serve only to indicate the deity and have a eulogising purpose. As a consequence, there is no scriptural authority to support the idea that the gods have material bodies like sentient beings. Indeed, Śabara asserts, the essential form or character of anything consists in the word only, thus a divinity is nothing but a word forming part of a

*mantra* that may be used in a prescribed ritual setting. The deities, in other words, are only words. Outside this context they are nothing.

- *Offerings and their result.* Śabara is concerned with the nature of deities only to the extent that they play a part in ritual performance. In the popular understanding, evidently well established by Śabara's time, *pūjā* was a means through which a person might offer something to a god and receive blessings in return. We even find these ideas in the Vedic corpus, as just noted. Śabara refutes these notions in three ways. Firstly, the idea that the gods are invoked, fed and so forth is shown to be false by the fact, already established, that the deities are not corporeal entities. They cannot be invoked and fed because they do not have material bodies: those without mouths cannot eat. Śabara secondly rejects the operative assumptions of *pūjā*. As noted in Section 2.7, Vedic rituals from the *gṛhya*-setting served as a model for temple-service, the reception of guests (*atithi*) playing an especially important role in the development. Śabara notes that what is done for a guest is prompted by the Vedic injunction that guests should be treated in a manner that pleases them. There are, however, no injunctions that enjoin the pleasing of a deity. Hence, Śabara concludes, "there is no analogy between the case of guests and the sacrificial act."[203] Finally, and most importantly for Śabara, is the fact that the object of sacrifice is *apūrva* (i.e., transcendental). The intangible result of a ritual, and the causative link between ritual and result, can only be known from Vedic texts; it is impossible to learn the results of action by sense perception, experimentation or other forms of cognition. Taking the Vedic statement *jyotiṣṭomena svargakāmo yajeta* – the example van Buitenen used to explain the scope of Mīmāṃsā – Śabara notes that it is the act of sacrifice and not the deity that accomplishes the desired result.[204] The gods and the substances to be offered are accomplished entities and produce nothing; it is only when they are brought together by a sacrificial act that there is some kind of result. From this Śabara concludes that the gods are subordinate. Like the substances that are going to be offered, the gods are mentioned only for the purpose of achieving heaven or some other end. So contrary to popular belief, the worshipped entity is not the principal factor. Rather, the worshipping of the worshipped entity is the principal factor: *na lokavad iha bhavitavyam, iha pūjamānapūjā pradhānam.*[205]
- *Ownership.* Continuing his exploration of the idea that the gods are able to give blessings and other rewards, Śabara turns to the question of property. Śabara's argument here is elegant and incisive: the gods cannot give anything because they cannot own anything. "All that happens," Śabara says, "is that when worshippers of the deity have made an offering to it, out of this act of offering comes prosperity to the worshippers."[206] Thus customary usages like "the god's village" (*devagrāma*) and "the god's field" (*devakṣetra*) are purely figurative. Property can only be owned by one who exercises the power of ownership and this, in Indian law, is defined as using property according to one's desires.[207] Deities have no such power. And against the

proposition that temple-priests offer substances according to the wishes of the deity, Śabara boldly states: "That is not right. What is vouched for by direct perception (*pratyakṣāt pramāṇāt*) is that the things are used according to the wish of the temple servants."[208] So in actuality the property is used by the custodians of the temple according to their desires.

Questions of ownership were tangential to Śabara's concerns, his central aim being to show that the reward of a sacrificial act does not come from the deity. Ownership was, however, taken up by subsequent commentators. Bhāruci, who lived in the seventh century, commented in some detail on *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (11: 26) where *devasva* – the property of the gods – is mentioned.[209] According to Bhāruci, the property mentioned in this verse is that given to a brāhmaṇa for sacrificial purposes. It does not become the god's property because the gods lack legal competence (*adhikāra*) and, accordingly, have no right over property.[210] Continuing Śabara's figurative interpretation, Bhāruci avers that when the deity "enjoys" property after a donation, it is "god's property" only until it has been used in a sacrifice. So we can only say that donated property is *devasva* in that brief gap between donation and sacrifice – and it is the priest who controls both.

In building his interpretive position, Śabara admits *mantra-* and *arthavāda-*texts as valid sources of evidence. This means he is prepared to cite the Vedas and dependent literatures of a laudatory and expository nature. The *smṛti*-texts – traditional "recollections" dealing with *dharma* and *upacara*, the customary practices of the world – depend for authority on the Veda and are not, therefore, reliable in and of themselves. Of course they can be cited, but their true meaning and applicability has to be decided against the Veda, the only stable template for sacred knowledge.[211] Given this position, it is hardly surprising that Śabara was not prepared to accept *purāṇa* or *itihāsa* as legitimate. Proponents of these texts, as noted in Section 2.12, employed various strategies to show that they were indeed "Vedic," a claim that sought validity, authority, and respectability for the religious practices the texts advocated. In the case of the *Mahābhārata*, it simply classed itself as the "fifth Veda." For Mīmāṃsakas, this was nonsense. The *Mahābhārata* was not a Veda because it was manifestly human in origin and concerned itself with human events – all very interesting, no doubt, but inadmissible as evidence for the definitive understanding of ritual acts. The point, of course, is that Vedic evidence is *apauruṣeya* – nonhuman – and so wonderfully free of human fallibilities.

In this hierarchy of textual authority, Śabara's insistence on the primacy of the Vedas meant that he rejected the operative assumptions of the copper-plate charters. Śabara does not mention the charters per se, but he does deal with similar merit-making activities, like the digging of tanks. Acts of this kind may be enjoined in *smṛti*-texts, he says, but because they are not corroborated by the Veda and because *smṛti*-texts are the work of human authors and are dependent on memory, they are not infallible. Thus, acts like the digging of tanks may be

disregarded.[212] Śabara used examples of this kind to establish a framework of authority through which one may judge the worth of things written in *smṛti*-texts. He is not, we must note, against the digging of tanks or other activities of this kind. It may be useful to dig a tank for a host of practical reasons, but in the absence of Vedic authority, it is not right to assume that this act will bring merit or some other intangible result, like a felicitous rebirth.

This explains why the Mīmāṃsakas were not happy with the operative assumptions of the charters. As noted in Section 2.2, the charters appealed to the *Mahābhārata* to show that kings held absolute title to the earth and that, based on this, they were authorised to make gifts of land. The charters used epic verses to announce the effect of these gifts. To recap: kings gain merit through land-grants and will, as a consequence, enjoy heaven after death. Inversely, those who overturn land-grants or assent to such actions will end up in hell. An important corollary was the notion that the merit was passed from king to king: the current ruler, whosoever he might be, enjoys the benefit of grants made in the past. Thus, kings who maintain and protect earlier grants will enjoy heaven, too.

The Mīmāṃsakas took exception to this not because land-grants were necessarily a bad thing – Vedic pundits were frequent beneficiaries – but because the conceptual framework was inherently flawed. Firstly, the *Mahābhārata* had no authority because it was unreliably human in origin. Indeed, much of it was dubious because it showed no respect for the Vedic tradition. Secondly, the charters used this questionable source to make claims about the intangible consequences of giving land. The idea that a king would enjoy heaven as a result of this act of giving was, quite simply, not substantiated by the Veda. The Vedas say *svargakāmo yajeta*, "he who desires heaven should sacrifice"; the Vedas do not say that "he who desires heaven should make grants of land." So the propositions in the charters are entirely bogus.

The starting point for the charters was the idea that kings held title to the earth. This was a fundamental on which the whole business of giving land rested. Śabara's views on this matter are brought forward in *Śabarabhāṣya* 6: 7: 2 where he deals with the injunction that in the Viśvajit sacrifice the *yajamāna* should give away everything he owns.[213] The basic problem is whether the king as "lord of the earth" (*sārvabhauma*) is able to give the earth away. Śabara's view is that the earth cannot be given away because it belongs to all men without distinction. Moreover it cannot be given away because this would require ownership and people are found to be the owners of individual plots and fields, not of the entire terrestrial globe. So while some might hold that the king as "lord of the earth" may give the earth away, Śabara notes that the "lord of the earth" enjoys ownership no different from other men. The peculiarity of the king's lordship derives from the fact that he is obliged to protect and preserve the produce of others, from which he receives an appropriate share

in the form of tax. This alone he possesses, not the earth. "From all this," Śabara concludes, "it follows that the earth cannot be given away."[214]

Although Śabara's concern was with ritual rather than polity, his conclusions are highly politicised. Through his use of the word *sārvabhauma*, Śabara was making a deliberate excursus into the loaded terminology of the Gupta political world. Amarasiṃha, one of Śabara's contemporaries, defined the universal monarch as a king who was *sārvabhauma*.[215] Among learned men living in north India during the fifth century, who could have possibly doubted that all this referred directly to the Gupta emperor? Śabara, in effect, was attacking the constitution of Gupta power as outlined in Section 1.11, at least to the extent that the king's conquest of world and its ritual enactments – the latter performed, rather ironically, by Śabara's Maitrāyaṇīya colleagues – gave the king special powers over the earth as a whole. Nothing more clearly demonstrates Śabara's steely determination to reject *itihāsa* and *smṛti*-texts as free-standing sources of knowledge.

Śabara's arguments against the king's ownership of the earth show that he regarded the rights of sitting tenants as inalienable. Nīlakaṇṭha subsequently extolled this in his *Vyavahāramayūkha*.[216] Commenting on Jaimini's aphorism that the earth could not be given away, Nīlakaṇṭha states:

> sampūrṇapṛthivīmaṇḍalasya tattadgrāmakṣetrādau svatvaṃ tu
> tattadbhaumikādīnām eva rājñāṃ tu karagrahaṇamātraṃ ||
> ata evedānīntanapāribhāṣikakṣetradānādau na
> bhūdānasiddhiḥ kiṃ tu vṛttikalpanamātram eva ||
> bhaumikebhyaḥ krīte tu gṛhakṣetrādau svatvam apy asty eva ||
> tena tatra bhūmidānasyāpi phalaṃ bhavati ||
>
> The ownership of each village and field in the entire earth or in a province belongs solely to the holders of the land and kings are entitled only to taxes. When kings make what are now called gifts of fields – *kṣetradāna* – no gift of land – *bhūdāna* – is accomplished, only (the gift of) allowances for maintenance (of donees). But in purchases (*krīta*) made from land holders even ownership in houses and fields accrues. Only in such cases is there a (spiritual) reward in *bhūmidāna*.

These remarks make clear that the Mīmāṃsakas regarded the king as possessing no inherent title to the earth. Should a king wish to make a donation of the earth, (i.e., a donation of absolute title as opposed to a donation of his tax entitlements), then he was obliged to purchase the relevant property from its owners.

The Mīmāṃsakas had fairly obvious reasons for taking this stand. Quoting one of their own aphorisms back at them, we may say: "Also we find motives" (*Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1: 3: 2: 4).[217] The most obvious motive, from the historical

perspective of Gupta times, was their dislike of temple-gods and attendant religious practices. If the king assumed absolute title to the earth, lands could be appropriated and assigned to temple-gods as inalienable endowments. Specific cases of this are documented by Gupta-period copper-plates, as noted in Section 2.7. Several charters from central India record how villages were reorganised into *devāgrahāra*-s and given over to temple-gods under the control of new elites. The king's orders dictating the terms of these arrangements were addressed to the village residents, including cultivators and brāhmaṇas. We know nothing about these people otherwise, but there can be little doubt that the brāhmaṇas already living in the villages would have resented the insinuation of state power and the exporpriation of village resources by a new-fangled temple-priest from the outside. These brāhmaṇas would have heartily agreed with the Mīmāṃsakas that the temple-cult was an innovation based on false premises.

Shrines and sanctuaries had long been an accepted part of Indian life and we find them mentioned coincidentally and unproblematically in several *sūtra*-texts. What disturbed the status quo was royal patronage and the creation of permanent endowments in favour of the deities in these shrines. This diverted resources away from traditional forms of Vedic worship. To their discomfiture, the Mīmāṃsakas discovered that they could not buck the trend. As described in Section 2.7, the distinction between Vedic and non-Vedic cults was becoming blurred as the Vedic Puruṣa was conflated with Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa in a consecrated image, an agenda advanced by the use of Vedic *mantra*-s in the *pūjā*-framework. This was both a theological and economic threat to Vedism. Śabara's commentary shows that the practitioners and upholders of the Vedic tradition understood this perfectly well and were determined to take a stand against the innovations.[218]

Looking back at the *Śabarabhāṣya* from the medieval perspective, one is struck by Śabara's defensive posture and by the fact that the battle against temple-gods was already lost. However agile Śabara may have been in his arguments, temple-based *pūjā*-cults could not be suppressed: their appeal on the religious imagination was too strong, and their usefulness as an instrument of political and economic power too great. Śaṅkara's spiritual *digvijaya* and celebrated victory in debate over the Mīmāṃsakas relegated them to a secondary position. And Śaṅkara's commentary on Bādarāyaṇa formalised the popular understanding of the gods.[219] By the time of Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacarita*, Jaimini was made the subject of a delightful pun: Viṣṇu is so graceful and omniscient that he deigned even to take the form of Jaimini, the very sage who denied that the gods have any form at all![220] But all this is to anticipate the medieval age. In the eighth century, Śaṅkara may have been able to assert with perfect confidence that *devatā*-s are real and have consciousness, but in the Gupta period these issues were far from settled. Temple-gods and the everyday

assumptions about the nature of worship were still being integrated into the expanding framework of orthodoxy.

As temples became increasingly important, the Mīmāṃsakas reiterated – unkindly we might say retreated into – their figurative interpretations. Thus, Vijñāneśvara, reconciled to the inevitability of land-grants, says that it is impossible to actually accept a field physically; its acceptance is effected by some enjoyment, however small, of its produce.[221] Regarding terms like *devāgrahāra*, quibbles could be made about the nature of the compound. We assume the case relationship to be a genitive: *devasyāgrahāraḥ*, an "estate of the god," but Mīmāṃsakas would argue for a dative *devāyāgrahāraḥ*, an "estate for the god" (i.e., that property is relinquished only for the purpose of performing sacrifices because the gods cannot exercise true ownership).[222] Linguistic artefacts of this nature are legion in Mīmāṃsā. In the case of the charter of Jayanātha where the term *devāgrahāra* is used, the Mīmāṃsakas would aver that their understanding was vindicated by the clerks who were appointed as trustees by the king.[223] These niceties were advanced by legal writers who were obliged – by an inexorable logic possible only in the knowledge systems of old India – to represent their prescriptions as resting on Vedic precedent. Of course, those who actually conducted the worship of images – and controlled the property and other goods offered to the gods – treated the gods as competent legal entities, analogous to brāhmaṇas and thus subject to the same rules as real persons.

The Mīmāṃsakas were consistent and uncompromising in their views about property and title. Virtues like self-restraint, compassion, and charity were everywhere encouraged, but in matters of charity the situation was clear: one had to own what one was going to give away. The anointed king should, the *Aitreyabrāhmaṇa* (39: 6) says, make gifts of gold, fields, and cattle. But there were natural limits. The next passage of the same text tells the story of Viśvakarman Bhauvana who wished to make a gift of the earth as a sacrificial fee to his priest Kaśyapa. The earth appeared and declared: "No mortal must give me away as a gift, O Viśvakarman Bhauvana. You desired to give me away. I shall plunge into the midst of the water so this promise of yours to Kaśyapa is fruitless."[224] Nonetheless, gifts of villages were made from an early time, as we learn from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (4: 2: 4–5), and the earth plunged down into the waters, as we learn from *Matsya Purāṇa* (248: 64–78).

These were serious matters. The earth had to be rescued from the waters and Mīmāṃsaka concerns had to be addressed. The earth was rescued, firstly, by Varāha who, as the theistic embodiment of sacrifice, raised the earth from the murky deep. This was done so sacrifices could be offered on the earth once again. Picking up the narrative thread of Viśvakarman Bhauvana, the Varāha myth can be read as an expiatory rite made manifest – a mighty remedy for a situation gone wrong on a cosmic scale. At Udayagiri, the Varāha also announces

a new age with new rules: the earth is now possessed of Varāha and the king has a special relationship with that god – and so also to the earth.

Mīmāṃsaka concerns also needed to be addressed, as we have just said, but a preliminary question is why their views should have mattered very much. If life was moving away from the Veda – as indeed it clearly was – one might ask why anyone should have bothered with Śabara's cantankerous intellectual gymnastics and the ancient ritualists he was defending. The answer lies in the power of the rituals that the Vedic tradition possessed, in particular the royal rituals that the Maitrāyaṇīyas were especially qualified to perform. In order for Samudragupta and his successors to be brought forth into kingship through the *rājasūya*, and for their imperial status to be ratified through the *aśvamedha* should they have chosen to perform one, the Gupta kings needed Vedic priests to perform the necessary rites. It was a marriage of necessity born of a quest for Vedic legitimacy. In their official representations, therefore, the Guptas needed to articulate their claims in a Mīmāṃsaka framework. The Varāha panel represents the god's hold over the earth as supreme and the king's relationship to Varāha as special. The *Viṣṇusmṛti* charts the implications of these facts, as noted in opening paragraphs of Chapter 2. The maintenance of the earth after the withdrawal of the incarnation falls to those who do their duty and uphold the *varṇa*-system. Because the king is the prime guarantor of *dharma* and *varṇa*, the care of the earth is largely his responsibility. For Mīmāṃsakas, this was well and good, but it still gave the king no absolute title to the earth: individual parcels of land are in the hands of individual men. If the king wanted these lands, he was obliged to purchase them.

At Udayagiri these objections were answered epigraphically. In the first place, Candragupta passed through central India on a programme of world conquest (*kṛtsnapṛthivījaya*).[225] These words confronted the issue of lawful acquisition raised by Gautama, Manu, and other lawgivers. They allowed that property could be acquired through gift, inheritance, purchase, lending on interest, conquest, and employment in labour. In the matter of conquest, the Mīmāṃsakas insisted that a victorious king would find sitting tenants on his newly conquered lands and that purchase was necessary if he wanted title as opposed to the share of tax, which was customarily his. For this, the Udayagiri inscription had a ready reply: Candragupta bought the earth with the "purchase-money of his prowess" (*vikramāvakrayakrītā*).[226] This statement is of utmost importance. We could not ask for a clearer justification of Gupta claims to the earth within the framework of Mīmāṃsaka thought. The inscription unambiguously addresses the Mīmāṃsaka assertion that if a king wanted title then he was legally bound to pay an appropriate price.

The wording of the Udayagiri inscription shows that Candragupta II and his chief minister Vīrasena – the author of the text as noted in Section 1.5 – understood the necessity of engaging with the Mīmāṃsakas in a public forum.

Inscriptions were, we need to remember, records of a public nature, created for open display. They differed from palm-leaf books, copies of which normally rested with the custodians of the knowledge they contained. Epigraphic "readers" would have included a wide range of people, some of whom may have been unable to read but who would have been told the import of what was written. A public understanding that the king had indeed paid the necessary price and met all the requirements allowed the Guptas and their subordinates to develop the hinterland through the system of temple-building and brāhmaṇical colonisation described in Chapter 2. The Guptas were obliged to pursue this course to increase their networks of power and revenue collection and so face down competing kings who might follow similar programmes of development.

To achieve this complex end, the Guptas had to mediate between different factions in the priesthood, specifically between traditional Vedic ritualists – who legitimated their kingship – and priests in newly established temples – who insinuated royal power into the hinterland and advanced social and economic change. That there were real tensions between sacerdotal groups is perfectly evident from the *Śabarabhāṣya*. We also find hints elsewhere, for example in the *Mānavadhārmaśāstra*, which does not countenance temple service (*devalaka*) as a suitable livelihood for brāhmaṇas – by which Manu means proper Vedic brāhmaṇas. Medhātithi, the ninth-century commentator, understood the term *devalaka* to mean *pratimāparicārakāḥ*, those who attend on images.[227] Then there is Kṛṣṇa's celebrated critique of the "flowery words" of the Veda in *Bhagavad Gītā* (2: 42–43). The energy of Kṛṣṇa's attack leaves little doubt that the traditionalists were intransigent and hidebound in the extreme. They looked back to ancient forms of Vedic worship and inward to their villages and the surrounding land. They sought to maintain old patterns of daily worship and to preserve long-established regimes of farming and cattle-grazing. That Vedic brāhmaṇas were effective in defending these life-ways is evident from the copper-plate charters that were issued in their favour well into the medieval period. In contrast, the new world of the temple reveals, as Jan Gonda has so succinctly said, "a religious life considerably different from that recommended in the Veda."[228] We have explored this in Section 2.7. Enriched by endowments and supported by the state, the temple advanced a pan-Indian programme of image-worship and innovative institutions like the *sattra*, the operation of which involved social engineering and new forms of production and exchange.

The impact of Mīmāṃsā can be detected in sources that predate both Śabara and the development of temples as significant institutions. Some of the Śālaṅkāyana plates, dateable to the fourth century, provide an interesting case in point (Figure 27). This charter records the donation of a village to a group of brāhmaṇas living in an *agrahāra*, but the gift is explicitly qualified as referring to certain taxes, not the village or land itself.[229] Even after temples had become

important in all the ways described so far, there was continued deference to the Mīmāṃsaka view. Thus, in the Māsod plates of Pravarasena II, parcels of land were given to a group of brāhmaṇas and a *mahāpuruṣa* who is styled *apratigrāhin*.[230] This *mahāpuruṣa* was a consecrated image of Viṣṇu and is described as *apratigrāhin* because images were not able to receive and hold gifts according to Mīmāṃsā. In the *dharma*-literature, a field dominated by the Mīmāṃsakas, the term *pratigraha-* referred specifically to persons who received gifts, a point elaborated in Medhātithi's commentary on the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*.[231]

Despite philosophical reservations and legal hesitations, land was frequently given away in an uncomplicated fashion. The lands in question were probably unoccupied, at least unoccupied by Vedic pundits and the *varṇa*-system. The *Arthaśāstra* regards the king as the lord of the earth, a view that appears in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (8: 39) where the king is given treasure-trove rights because he is the "ultimate lord of the soil."[232] This was not a universal assertion to be applied in all contexts: what was being claimed was the crown's due portion of buried treasure that had no documented owner. Thus, the *Arthaśāstra* admits that farmland long occupied is effectively owned for all practical purposes. But the text leaves no doubt that the king held title to all unoccupied land, all pasture land, and all mineral wealth.[233] The development of unoccupied areas (*śūnyaniveśa*) and its use for agricultural purposes did not necessarily lead to its complete alienation from the crown. These points again highlight that the Mīmāṃsakas were concerned with existing land and the status quo. In the hinterland – the primary focus of the colonisation process – Mīmāṃsaka opinion did not necessarily apply.

These dynamics are illustrated by the plates of Dahrasena, a charter that drew detailed attention in Section 1.11. We may close this section by revisiting its contents and commenting on their implication for the operation of land-tenure and title. Dahrasena was a relatively minor *mahārāja*, but the structure of his charter encapsulates the operative arrangements of the system introduced under the Guptas. The text starts with the king who is titled a "supporter of the horse-sacrifice" and a "devotee of the Lord's feet."[234] These were claims to specific forms of authority by Dahrasena in that they gave him, firstly, the power of a consecrated king and, secondly, the possession of the earth by devotional association with Viṣṇu. These roles allowed Dahrasena to possess the earth and thus to make grants of land, in this case to a brāhmaṇa. The action was then endorsed by citations from the *Mahābhārata*. The organisation of this text documents the de facto restructuring of sacred knowledge under the Guptas. The texts themselves were not altered, only their relative relationships. Thus, *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *itihāsa* – the second often with theistic and devotional content as in the *Viṣṇusmṛti* or *Vaikhānasamārtasūtra* – were manoeuvred into a self-validating triad. This triad was used to manufacture an encyclopaedic endorsement of the land-granting system. It is implicit in the organisation of

fifth-century charters and cited openly for the first time in the Gunaighar copper-plates of Vainyagupta.[235] Seemingly contradictory statements in the vast literary corpus of *śruti*, *smṛti*, and *itihāsa* were handled through the hermeneutic of *ekavākyatā* – "all sages are in harmony" – as noted at the beginning of this section. Co-opted through royal patronage and grants of land, *śruti*-holders could neither resist the new classificatory structure of knowledge nor the harnessing of their authority to the land-granting system.

## 3.6. ĀCĀRYA

The last member of the spiritual triumvirate that guided the Gupta court was the royal preceptor or *ācārya*. The centrality of the preceptor is highlighted by his appearance in texts outlining the royal routine: the king was supposed to be roused in the morning by the sound of musical instruments and to receive blessings from his preceptor (*ācārya*), sacrificial priests (*ṛtvij*), and chaplain (*purohita*). After that the king was to see his physician, chief cook, and astrologer.[236] Otherwise, the *ācārya* and *purohita* were to accompany the king when he visited religious places or investigated the affairs of brāhmaṇas and ascetics.[237] In the chapter on remunerations, the *Arthaśāstra* notes that the *ācārya* and sacrificial priests are deserving of 48,000 coin. And apartments for the *ācārya* and *purohita* were to be built in the heart of the palace.[238] So it is clear that the *ācārya* enjoyed a high rank at court and that he intersected with other priests on a regular basis. And like the other priests, he controlled his own domain of sacred knowledge.

A useful place to begin an exploration of this knowledge, and the status it conferred, is the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*. There we find the following definition:

> upanīya tu yaḥ śiṣyaṃ vedam adhyāpayed dvijaḥ |
> sakalpaṃ sarahasyaṃ ca tam ācāryaṃ pracakṣate || 2: 140
>
> The twice-born man who initiates a pupil and teaches him the Veda, together with the *kalpa* and the *rahasya*, is declared to be the *ācārya*.

This shows that Manu understood the *ācārya* to be a person who took disciples, taught them the Veda, and initiated them into special spheres of knowledge. The *kalpa* was ceremonial procedure – all important in the Vedic tradition as we have seen – while the *rahasya* consisted of secret or esoteric wisdom. The commentarial tradition beginning with Medhātithi understood this to mean *Upaniṣad*.[239] The type of initiation ceremony or *upanayana* which Manu has in mind when he speaks of a pupil's initiation is first described in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*. In this, the *ācārya* assigns the disciple to Prajāpati and Savitṛ.[240] The transformative power of this procedure is outlined in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (2: 148) where initiation through the Sāvitṛ is said to confer a new birth, exempt from age and death.[241] For these reasons the *ācārya*

was ranked high on the social scale and was seen as presiding over the highest world:

> ācāryo brahmaṇo mūrtiḥ pitā mūrtiḥ prajāpateḥ |
> mātā pṛthivyā mūrtis tu bhrātā svo mūrtir ātmanaḥ || 2: 226
> ācāryo brahmalokeśaḥ prājāpatye pitā prabhuḥ |
> atithis tv indralokeśo devalokasya cartvijaḥ || 4: 182
>
> The teacher is the *mūrti* of Brahma, the father the *mūrti* of Prajāpati, while the mother the *mūrti* of the earth and an (elder) full brother the *mūrti* of one's self.
>
> The *ācārya* is the lord of *brahmaloka*, the father has power over the world of Prajāpati, while the guest rules the world of Indra and the *ṛtvij* the world of the gods.

These verses make clear that while the *ṛtvij* priests were able to control the world of the gods through sacrifice, the *ācārya* was more elevated: he was intimately involved with the spiritual life of his followers, and he could provide a new life by means of his special wisdom.

The exact relationship of the *ācārya* to the *guru* is problematic, and there is no unanimity about their respective duties and obligations in the Sanskrit sources. In assessing the statements of various *dharma*-texts, Gonda concluded that in the first place and originally the *guru* was a father who maintained the child, performed the sacraments (*saṃskāra*) and introduced him to the Veda. The *ācārya* took charge after initiation, teaching the student more advanced knowledge as well as his socio-religious duties (*dharma*) and traditionally correct conduct (*ācāra*).[242] Side-stepping the ritual and educational duties and speaking generally, the word *guru* may be judged the overarching term and *ācārya* the more specific. Thus, Gautama (2: 50) states that the *ācārya* is the chief *guru*, while *Viṣṇusmṛti* (32: 1) declares that father, mother, and *ācārya* are the three highest *guru*-s a person may have.[243] Manu, with characteristic ingenuity, negotiates his way through the terminological debates taking place in the early Gupta period: "The man who benefits (the pupil) by (instruction in) the Veda . . . is called his *guru* in this (law-book) in recognition of that assistance with Vedic knowledge."[244] With this statement, Manu is basically admitting that the ideal of a parental *guru* followed by an *ācārya* for advanced studies had to be qualified if his text was going to cover the social realities of the fourth century in a definitive fashion. The nature of the problem is illustrated by the Tāḷagunda inscription that says Mayūraśarman went to Kāñcī to finish his studies with his *guru*.[245] The word *ācārya* is not used in this record, a fact indicating the terms had become interchangeable. This happened because the act of initiation, as already observed, was akin to a new birth, and this, in effect, made the student a child once again. The *ācārya*, to whom the pupil was supposed to show great deference, was a father-like figure who could be seen fittingly as a *guru*. And the

teacher's family could become the pupil's new family – his *gurukula* – as mentioned in Manu and the Tāḷagunda inscription both.[246] The *Atharvaveda* puts the matter succinctly when it says: "the *ācārya* by drawing the pupil within himself as in a womb, gives him a new birth."[247] These tendencies were reinforced in esoteric circles where the novice was supposed to renounce the past and start an entirely new life in religion. This explains how the terms *ācārya* and *guru* came to be synonyms in early theistic contexts as documented most clearly by the Mathurā pillar inscription of Gupta year 61. This record and its use of these terms have already drawn comment in Section 2.10.

The Siwanī plates of Pravarasena II show that the preceptor – whether *guru* or *ācārya* – was well known in the fifth century and considerably more than a textual ideal. These plates record a donation of land to an *ācārya* named Devaśarman who is described as an Adhvaryu and a Taittirīya. As noted in Section 3.3, Pravarasena's support of the Taittirīyas in general, and Devaśarman in particular, indicates that the Taittirīyas were responsible for royal sacrifices in the Vākāṭaka realm. The Siwanī plates further show that the traditional system for the transmission of the Veda as described in the *Mānavadharma-śāstra* was operative in the Deccan during Pravarasena's reign. Devaśarman would have trained suitably qualified brāhmaṇas in all aspects of his branch of the *Yajurveda* and he would have initiated disciples through the *upanayana* ceremony. As an *ācārya* of the Taittirīya school, Devaśarman probably had two *rahasya* works in his textual repertoire for esoteric purposes: the *Taittirīya* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (see Table 2 where the relationships are shown). The *Śvetāśvatara* is manifestly theistic in orientation and contains, as Hume noted long ago, direct and unmistakeable references to the dualistic philosophy of Sāṃkhya.[248] Hans Bakker has explored the theological dimensions: in describing the supreme being as Maheśvara and Īś, in addition to Śiva, the auspicious one hidden in all things, the *Śvetāśvatara* may be considered the earliest treatise of the Maheśvara faith.[249] From the perspective of the priesthood and the concerns of this chapter, the *Śvetāśvatara* provides an instructive statement about the conditions under which esoteric wisdom was to be transmitted and the attitude that devotees were to have toward their spiritual guides:[250]

> vedānte paramaṃ guhyaṃ purākalpe pracoditam |
> nāpraśāntāya dātavyaṃ nāputrāyāśiṣyāya vā punaḥ || 22
> yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau |
> tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ
> prakāśante mahātmanaḥ || 23
>
> This supreme secret was proclaimed
> during a former age in the Vedānta.
> One should never disclose it to a person

who is not of a tranquil disposition or
who is not one's son or pupil.
Only in a man who has the deepest love for God,
And who shows the same love toward his *guru* as toward God,
Do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth.

As a royal favourite, high-minded brāhmaṇa, and important knowledge-holder in the Taittirīya tradition, Devaśarman would have read these lines and understood them as being applicable to himself and his disciples. Now given that Pravarasena donated land to Devaśarman, and recorded in the text of the very charter announcing this donation that he was a devotee of Śiva, we can propose – I think with some confidence – that Devaśarman was an *ācārya* with strong Śaiva inclinations, that Pravarasena was his disciple, and that the king's grant of land to Devaśarman represented the *dakṣiṇā* he offered to his preceptor on the occasion of his religious initiation into the worship of Śiva.

The Siwanī plates confirm the pre-eminence of Taittīryas in the Deccan, but they do not describe the nature of Pravarasena's *dīkṣā* or provide information about Devaśarman's beliefs as a follower of Śiva. These data were *rahasya* and not suitable for inclusion in the text of a public charter. The paucity of information on these points will no doubt disappoint the student of religion, but from the institutional perspective, one key point is clear: the *ācārya* was an important, rich, and influential figure at court.[251] Moreover, Pravarasena's patronage of Devaśarman suggests that preceptors had long played an important role in the Vākāṭaka kingdom. This is indicated by Pravarasena's pursuit of a more independent policy compared to his predecessors, a significant indicator of which was his declaration that he followed Śaivism – the faith of his ancestors – rather than the Vaiṣṇava cult of the Gupta kings. This change in political and religious direction has already been noted in Section 3.3. If Devaśarman was an agent and beneficiary of the change, then the historical implication is that earlier preceptors in the Vākāṭaka realm were Vaiṣṇava.

As it happens, there are references to these Vaiṣṇava preceptors in several inscriptions. The Poona plates, most significantly, describe how Prabhāvatīguptā granted a village to *ācārya* Canālasvāmin, a donee who is called *bhagavadbhakta* – a devotee of the Bhagavat (i.e., Lord Viṣṇu).[252] Now this grant was made in the month of Kārttika on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight. The timing is crucial because, as noted in Section 1.4, the day falls immediately after the festival for waking Viṣṇu from his four-month period of sleep. The implication is that Canālasvāmin was one of the priests responsible for the waking rite. Because Prabhāvatīguptā styles herself in the Poona charter as *atyantabhagavadbhaktā* – a staunch devotee of the Lord – we may suppose that she gifted the village to the *ācārya* following the successful completion of the ritual. A textual warrant for this interpretation is provided by the

*Viṣṇudharmāḥ*. This describes the *varṣāmāsavrata* and prescribes that gifts to brāhmaṇas should be made at the conclusion of the observance.[253]

Canālasvāmin's doctrinal orientation is not mentioned in the Poona plates, but information about other Vaiṣṇava schools prevalent in the Deccan during his time is given in the Māṇḍhaḷ charter.[254] This mentions two religious establishments (*adhivāsa*) of the Sātvata *caraṇa*. These Sātvatas hailed from Vatsagulma, and we may suppose that royal protection was extended to them after Prabhāvatīguptā came to the Vākāṭaka court to marry Rudrasena II in circa CE 388. The Sātvatas were an important strand within the early Vaiṣṇava fold. They had as their central object of veneration – at least originally – a group of five deified heroes: Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Sāmba, and Aniruddha.[255] According to the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*, the Vṛṣṇi clan of Yādavas belonged to the Sātvata race. Devotees of the Vṛṣṇi heroes were called Sātvata, and their religion, the Sātvata *dharma*.[256] The first archaeological evidence we have for these religious ideas is an inscription from Mathurā which records the existence of a stone shrine for images of the "five exalted Vṛṣṇi heroes" (*bhagavatāṃ vṛṣṇīnā(ṃ) paṃcavīrāṇāṃ pratimā[ḥ] śailadevagṛ[ha]*).[257] How the Sātvatas regarded these images is indicated by the description: they were "five objects of adoration, made of stone, radiant, as it were, with highest beauty" (*ārcādeśāḥ śailāḥ paṃca jvalantaḥ iva paramavapuṣā*). The broken torsos of these figures, preserved now in the Mathurā Museum, leave no doubt that the Vṛṣṇi heroes were objects of veneration and substantial reification in the first century CE. The continuation of this tradition into the fourth century is shown by the images of Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, and a Vṛṣṇi hero, possibly Sāmba, from Māṇḍhal, the very find-spot of the Vākāṭaka charter mentioning the Sātvata *caraṇa*.[258]

The prevalence of the Sātvata *dharma* during early Gupta times is highlighted by the Toshām rock inscription. Engraved in a rock-shelter on a prominent hill twenty kilometres from Hissār in Haryāna, this record informs us that two tanks and a residence were made by Somatrāta, a Sātvata *ācārya*. An early photograph of the inscription is preserved in the Cunningham collections in the British Museum. This is an important record for the present purpose, so given here in full.[259]

1) jitaṃ abhīkṣṇam eva jāmbavatīvadanāravindorjjitāḷinā |
2) dānavāṅganāmukhāmbhojalakṣmītuṣāreṇa viṣṇunā |
3) anekapuruṣābhyāgatāryyasātvatayogācāryya-
4) bhagavadbhaktayaśastrātaprapautrasyācāryyaviṣṇutrātapautrasyācā
ryya-
5) vasudattap[u]trasya rāvaṇyām utpannasya
gotamasagotrasyācāryyopāddhyāya-
6) yaśastrāt[ān]ujasyācāryyasomatrātasyedaṃ bhagavatpādopayo-
7) jyaṃ kuṇḍam uparyyāvasathaḥ ku-
8) ṇḍaṃ cāparaṃ [||]

> Verily victory has been achieved again and again by Viṣṇu – a mighty bee on the water lily that is the face of Jāmbavatī – a very frost to the beauty of the water lilies which are the faces of the women of the demons!
>
> This reservoir and the residence above, and a second reservoir, intended for the use of the feet of the Lord, (are the work) of the *ācārya* Somatrāta, the great grandson of Yaśastrāta – a successor of many men (of preceding generations), an Ārya Sātvata, *yogācārya* and devotee of the Lord – the grandson of *ācārya* Viṣṇutrāta (and) the son, begotten on Rāvaṇī, of *ācārya* Vasudatta of the Gotama *gotra* (and) the younger brother of *ācārya* and *upādhyāya* Yaśastrāta.

This inscription is not dated, but it can be placed palaeographically in the late fourth or early fifth century. So the Sātvata lineage it records reaches back to about the beginning of the fourth century. Although the opening benediction is brief, it provides valuable insights into the theology of the Toshām *ācārya*-s. Most critically, the poetic link between Viṣṇu and Jāmbavatī – a queen of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and the mother of Sāmba – shows the complete identification of Viṣṇu with Kṛṣṇa. In other words, the inscription indicates that by the close of the fourth century Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva had emerged as the principle object of worship among the Sātvatas. The Vṛṣṇi heroes are alluded to in an indirect way, so Saṃkarṣaṇa Balarāma and Sāmba were perhaps still foci of veneration but, as we shall shortly see, they had become associated with or absorbed into abstract principles in early versions of Sāṃkhya and Pañcarātra. These developments removed the heroes from the domain of immediate representation and devotional veneration. The supremacy of Vāsudeva is clarified in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* where he is identified with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa and described as Hari, the supreme soul and the internal ruler of all.[260] The Toshām inscription demonstrates that this high place of the god was sufficiently secure by the end of the fourth century for it to be encapsulated in a benedictory verse. The verse also shows that the Sātvatas were conversant with the idea that Viṣṇu had repeatedly intervened in the affairs of the world as appearances (*vibhāva*) or incarnations (*avatāra*) to overthrow the forces of evil. To rephrase the matter in a slightly different way, the Toshām inscription betrays the conflation of two strands in the Bhāgavata faith: one in which Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa had become the supreme object of worship but was still linked to the Vṛṣṇis, and the other in which Viṣṇu was understood as having appeared in the world again and again to defeat the forces of evil.

How these different modes of the divine were understood to coexist is explained in Nārada's visit to the "White Island," a story found in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*.[261] Nārada wished to see the higher form (*prakṛtim ādyām*) of Nārāyaṇa and, thanks to his purity and dedication, was granted a unique vision of the god. In the self-discourse that follows (*MBh* 12: 326: 20–41), Nārāyaṇa explains how the universe emanates from him

and will be reabsorbed back into him. These processes of creation and dissolution are described using Sāṃkhya terminology, key elements in the system being equated with the Vṛṣṇis. To this explanation is appended a prophesy (*MBh* 12: 326: 71–92) that Nārāyaṇa will appear in future ages as Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, and other incarnations including Kṛṣṇa. Nārāyaṇa even says in *MBh* 12: 326: 92 that he will effect the dissolution of the Sātvata chiefs and the city of Dvārakā, as if indicating that the religion of *avatāra*-s will overtake the Sātvata belief in Vāsudeva's emanations.

The Toshām inscription provides a tantalising glimpse into the kind of place where these theological ideas were developed. The preceptors built, the inscription says, an *āvasatha* – a residence or habitation. As shown in Section 2.6, the term *avasatha* was used interchangeably with *sattra* in fourth- and fifth-century records. The words indicate a place where food, clothing, and medicine were distributed. Welcoming brāhmaṇas, wandering mendicants, and the needy, these charitable dispensaries were designed to advance the interests of the temple and temple-based theism in Indian society. A closely related sort of establishment seems intended by the term *adhivāsa* in the Māṇḍhal charter. At Toshām, there can be little doubt that the *avasatha* served as a centre for the propagation of the Sātvata *dharma*. Supported by a circle of lay devotees, and perhaps also by royal grants, the Toshām preceptors would have organised charitable activities, done *pūjā* to images, and encouraged the study (and copying) of texts dealing with Sātvata ritual, theology, and cosmology. Similar institutions and religious networks were developing across much of India, as the inscriptions examined in Chapter 2 show unambiguously. What Toshām adds to the picture is religious agency: it was the preceptors who were the custodians of the Sātvata *dharma* and the *guru-śiṣya* lineages that propagated their view of life. And Toshām was evidently an important place for the Sātvatas. It has a number of inscriptions giving the names of *ācārya*-s and a host of archaeological residues that have yet to be investigated in a systematic manner.[262]

The description of Yaśastrāta – the head of the Toshām lineage – as a devotee of the Bhagavat and *yogācārya*, reminds us that the Sātvata *dharma* had the liberation of the human soul as its central and practical aim. The path to Vāsudeva involved spiritual application (*yoga*) that guided individuals through a universe that had evolved from basic elements into a more differentiated, varied, and substantial world. Through various steps – each identified with a realm named after one of the Vṛṣṇis – devotees passed through increasingly subtle worlds after death. Leaving behind their *triguṇa*-nature, they at last entered the *kṣetrajña*, that is Vāsudeva.[263] Of course, Kṛṣṇa also advocates a similar shedding of the three *guṇa*-s in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and calls himself Vāsudeva and the *kṣetrajña*.[264] We may even read the *Gītā* with Malinar as the royal teaching par excellence and the religious manual of the Gupta kings.[265]

None of this, however, takes us closer to the royal preceptor. We may have good reason to suppose that the *Gītā* was a respected text in the Gupta period and that it was recited even to the Gupta king, but the *ācārya* who recited it to him remains historically illusive. Certainly it would be premature and injudicious to propose that the *ācārya* was a Sātvata simply because this group has a relatively high profile in surviving inscriptions.

In the absence of direct evidence in the epigraphic corpus, a number of approaches can be taken toward solving the historical problem of the Gupta *ācārya*. Although some produce no result – as we shall shortly see – they are helpful nonetheless in narrowing the field and providing a general picture of religious life in the fourth and fifth centuries. Working firstly by analogy, we return to Pravarasena in the Deccan. As noted toward the beginning of this section, he drew his *ācārya* from the ranks of the Taittirīyas of the *Black Yajurveda*, selecting in particular a preceptor with Śaiva leanings. If we interpret Pravarasena's choice as being motivated by a desire to counter the influence of the Gupta north in the Vākāṭaka realm, then we might expect the Gupta *ācārya* to have come from a different Vedic *caraṇa* and to have been Vaiṣṇava in his orientation. The Vaikhānasa school seems to meet these requirements, at least at first glance. They belong to the *Black Yajurveda* yet developed an elaborate Vaiṣṇava theology, identifying Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in a consecrated image with the Puruṣa of the Vedic hymns. Some of the Vaikhānasa material – and its usefulness for understanding the origin of *pūjā* – has drawn attention in Chapter 2. The Vaikhānasa case is demolished, however, by the fact that the school is confined to south India and, more particularly, by the fact that the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* shows Dravidian influences in its Sanskrit.[266] This proves that by the time of the *sūtra* – about the fourth century CE – the custodians of this tradition had long resided in Andhra and Tamil Nadu. As there is no textual or epigraphic evidence to suggest that the Vaikhānasas ever lived in north India, it seems unlikely that they were deliberately brought there by the Guptas for religious purposes. The Vaikhānasas have to be rejected on these grounds as a possible source for the Gupta *ācārya*, but we shall see in due course that their literature preserves instructive information about the preceptor and his ritual duties.

Keeping to the same approach and staying within the Vedic tradition narrowly defined, the next possibility is the Maitrāyaṇīya school. Because the Maitrāyaṇīyas served the Guptas as sacrificial priests, it would have been a simple matter to recruit a suitably qualified Maitrāyaṇīya to be the king's *ācārya*. This would have advanced the school's interests at court and would have been seen by them as politically expedient. The Vaiṣṇava elements in the *Mānavaśrautasūtra*, for example the "measuring of Viṣṇu" in the *śulbasūtra*, adds credence to this proposal.[267] However attractive a Maitrāyaṇīya preceptor with a Vaiṣṇava *rahasya* text might seem in theory, the proposition quickly

founders on the textual realities of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*. Transmitted in a surprisingly confused state, this *Upaniṣad* has been conflated with other works of the same or similar name and contains extensive interpolations and editorial additions. The core text was cleverly salvaged by van Buitenen, but its teachings show no link to the Vaiṣṇava cult of the Gupta kings.[268] The interpolations are more promising – Āditya and the *kṣetrajña* are featured – but the ideas in these later sections are not presented systematically and seem to be derived from more authoritative sources.

The transmission of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* shows that the Maitrāyaṇīyas put little store in the text and considered it tangential to the integrity of their school. Furthermore the conflation of a bona fide Vedic *Upaniṣad* with analogous texts having no Vedic affiliation, and the attempt to rework the result into a systematic presentation, shows how a *rahasya* text could be decoupled from the Vedic framework and become part of an autonomous literature dealing with esoteric knowledge. The fate of the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* is a microcosm of developments that were taking place in a number of areas, even if those dealing with the materials perceived them as retaining an essentially Vedic nature. Thus, when the Maitrāyaṇīyas who compiled the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* sanctimoniously ordained: "Let him – the brāhmaṇa versed in the Veda – walk in that path of holy men which his fathers and his grandfathers have followed," they seem blissfully unaware of the manifest hypocrisy of the dictum.[269] Not only had the Maitrāyaṇīyas let their own *Upaniṣad* slip away, they had concocted a legal work that was consciously designed to stand on its own outside the Vedic system. Its claims to authority and its success as an independent legal text defies the very notion of walking down the path which "fathers and grandfathers have followed."

In terms of tracing the identity of the Gupta *ācārya*, the foregoing observations mean that the method of working by historical analogy has to be abandoned (i.e., just because Pravarasena drew his *ācārya* from a Vedic *caraṇa*, there is no reason to suppose that the Guptas acted in an analogous manner). Indeed the possibility of candidates from one or other of the Vedic schools seems positively excluded. By the fourth century, significant speculation about the nature of ritual and the godhead had developed outside the core of Vedism, the Vaiṣṇavas in particular advancing a new understanding of the sacrifice. Drawing on older Vedic ideas in which the deity was understood as present in the sacrifice, early Vaiṣṇava thinkers developed the idea that the sacrifice could become a kind of epiphany – indeed that the transcendent Puruṣa created the ritual as an immanent representation or *pratimā* of himself.[270] This allowed the traditional power of Vedism to be linked with theism, devotion, and the worship of images. The combination of these themes, as noted in Chapter 1, sits at the heart of Udayagiri and the disposition of its sculptures: Candragupta II was both *yajamāna* and *bhakta* (i.e., the patron of an old-style sacrifice and the

devotee of a god who was the living physical embodiment of that sacrifice). Locating the *ācārya* of the Gupta king – theologically if not personally – thus involves trying to make meaningful comparisons between Udayagiri and coeval, or roughly coeval, inscriptions and texts of the Vaiṣṇava faith.

Although the evidence is fragmentary, the Sātvatas can be safely excluded from consideration at the outset. Their belief system, as seen in the foregoing pages, focussed on Vāsudeva and Saṃkarṣaṇa, with a subordinate but important position for Sāmba. The centrality of this triad to the Sātvata system is indicated by the sculptures and inscriptions from Māṇḍhal and Toshām, both dealt with earlier. This material has no parallels at Udayagiri. As noted in Chapter 1, the centrepiece at Udayagiri is the recumbent image of Nārāyaṇa, along with his incarnations Narasiṃha and Varāha; Saṃkarṣaṇa is relegated to a supporting role as Śeṣa, while Sāmba, if he was ever there at all, has been conflated with Āditya as the sun god Bhāillasvāmin.[271] The Pañcarātras can be excluded for similar reasons. This school, which existed in an inchoate state in Gupta times if at all, revered Vāsudeva and built a theology around his emanations (*vyūha*) rather than Viṣṇu and his incarnations (*avatāra*). The emanations are absent at Udayagiri and neither the Pañcarātras nor their system is mentioned in any Gupta record.[272]

This process of deduction leads us to the Bhāgavatas (i.e., those who worshipped Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as the Bhagavat). Although this designation appears frequently in the epigraphic corpus, its precise doctrinal meaning is unclear because Bhāgavata functioned as both an overarching and specific term. Thus, for example, the Sātvatas in the Toshām inscription called themselves Bhāgavatas. The situation is comparable to groups within Protestantism: Calvinists, Lutherans, and Methodists differ in their views, but all are covered by the term *Protestant*.[273] So when Candragupta II introduces *paramabhāgavata* as a royal title and Prabhāvatīguptā styles herself *atyantabhagavadbhaktā*, we are none the wiser as to which form of Bhāgavatism they followed. Canālasvāmin, the *ācārya* who received a village from Prabhāvatīguptā, was a *bhagavadbhakta* and almost certainly a royal intimate, but there is no clue about his beliefs as a Bhāgavata other than his participation in the *varṣāmāsavrata*. Despite these problems, the Bhāgavatism of the Gupta court can be reconstructed from epigraphic sources, the most important document being the oldest Valkhā charter. As noted in Section 1.11, where the relevant text is given in full, this charter includes a devotionally charged passage describing the forms of Viṣṇu to which *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa was devoted. It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this for the religious and institutional history of the Guptas. The key features, to recap, are that *mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa announces himself to be a subordinate of the Gupta monarch and a slave of Lord Nārāyaṇa (*svāmināryaṇadāsa*). This leaves little doubt that he was a steadfast follower

of the official royal cult. Bhuluṇḍa then records that he was thoroughly devoted to Viṣṇu, a god with no beginning, middle, or end, the light of the three worlds and the *guru* of gods, demons, serpents, and men. Viṣṇu is furthermore described as the rescuer of the earth in the form of Varāha and as recumbent on the cosmic waters – a clear reference to Nārāyaṇa. Viṣṇu is also praised as the slayer of a series of demons. These demons are important because they are known from the *Harivaṃśa* to have been killed by Kṛṣṇa. The Valkhā charter also refers to the destruction of Daśavadana. This is an epithet of Rāvaṇa, Rāma's well-known demonic adversary in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. What we have in the Valkhā charter, therefore, is a system of *avatāravāda* in which special emphasis was given to Nārāyaṇa, Varāha, and Viṣṇu's human incarnations Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

In terms of textual sources, this form of religion is encapsulated in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5: 17: 1–18. This hymn, sung by Akrūra as he proceeded to Gokula to meet Kṛṣṇa, situates the cult of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa against the other branches of Bhāgavatism – including the Sātvatas – and defines Viṣṇu's relationship to Vedic knowledge and the sacrifice.

nirjagmuś ca yato vedā vedāṅgāny akhilāni ca |
drakṣyāmi tat paraṃ dhāma dhāmnāṃ bhagavato mukham || 6
yajñeṣu yajñapuruṣaḥ puruṣaiḥ puruṣottamaḥ |
ijyate yo 'khilādhāras taṃ drakṣyāmi jagatpatim || 7
iṣṭvā yam indro yajñānāṃ śatenāmararājatām |
avāpa tam anantādim ahaṃ drakṣyāmi keśavam || 8
na brahmā nendrarudrāśvivasvādityamarudgaṇāḥ |
yasya svarūpaṃ jānanti pratyakṣam yāti me hariḥ || 9
sarvātmā sarvavit sarvaḥ sarvabhūteṣvavasthitaḥ |
yo hy acintyo 'vyayo vyāpī sa vakṣyati mayā saha || 10
matsyakūrmavarāhāśvasiṃharūpādibhiḥ sthitim |
cakāra jagato yo 'jaḥ so 'dya mām ālapiṣyati || 11
yo 'nantaḥ pṛthivīṃ dhatte śekharasthitisaṃsthitām |
so 'vatīrṇo jagatyarthe mām akrūreti vakṣyati || 13
taraty avidyāṃ vitatāṃ hṛdi yasmin niveśite |
yogamāyām ameyāya tasmai vidyātmane namaḥ || 15
yajvibhir yajñapuruṣo vāsudevaś ca sātvataiḥ |
ekāntavedibhir viṣṇuḥ procyate yo nato 'smi tam || 16
yathā yatra jagaddhāmni dhātary etat pratiṣṭhitam |
sadasat tena satyena mayy asau yātu saumyatām || 17
smṛte sakalakalyāṇabhājanaṃ yatra jāyate |
puruṣas tam ajaṃ nityaṃ vrajāmi śaraṇaṃ harim || 18

From whence proceeded the Vedas, Vedāṅga and other compendia,
Lord of appearances in appearance – That supreme face I shall behold!

The husband of the earth, the prop of all, who is worshipped as
the soul of the Sacrifice in the sacrifice,

The supreme soul by all souls – Him I shall behold!

He who is without beginning or end, whom Indra worshipped
with a hundred sacrifices for dominion over the gods –
Keśava I shall behold!

He whose essential form is unknown to Brahmā or to Indra, Rudra,
the Aśvins, Vasus, Ādityas or Maruts –
He will go visibly before me!

The spirit of all, the knower of all, who is all and is present in
all beings,
He who is inconceivable, imperishable, and pervasive –
He shall converse with me!

He, the Unborn, who made good the world in his sojourns as the
Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Horse, Lion and other forms –
He shall address me today!

That Ananta, who holds the earth goddess on his crest,
who came down to the earth for its protection –
He shall call me by name!

Ignorance, a vast magical illusion, is crossed, when he is made to
enter our heart.
To the inscrutable living soul of knowledge – Glory unto Him![274]

Whom sacrificers call the soul of the sacrifice, the Sātvatas call
Vāsudeva,
And knowers of the final path call Viṣṇu – To Him I bow!

He in whom the cause and appearances of this world,
Real and unreal, are comprehended – Let Him be propitious to me!
The *puruṣa* remembering whom we become fit receptacles of
all that is good, the eternal, unborn – to Hari I go for refuge!

These verses represent the kind of Bhāgavatism which may have prevailed at the Gupta court. The advocate of this theology, whatever the actual details, would have been a Bhāgavata *ācārya* – someone in north India akin to Prabhāvatīguptā's Canālasvāmin. In making this suggestion we are assuming that Prabhāvatīguptā followed the Gupta example, an assumption justified by iconographic and organisational parallels between Udayagiri and Rāmagiri – the key Vaiṣṇava sites of the Guptas and Vākāṭakas respectively.[275] These connections are confirmed in a poetic fashion by the itinerary of the Cloud Messenger in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*. The Cloud starts its journey from Rāmagiri and then proceeds to Vidiśā where it halts at a hill that is surely Udayagiri.[276] What is missing in the archaeological documentation is a charter recording a grant to a royal *ācārya* in the north. While we wait for such a charter to be unearthed, there is meanwhile some fairly direct evidence for influential preceptors at the

Gupta court. This is provided by a set of three inscriptions from Durjanpur, a village at Besnagar not far from Udayagiri. The inscriptions consist of dedications recording that images of Candraprabha, Puṣpadanta, and Padmaprabha were commissioned by *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Rāmagupta, the late fourth-century king. The most complete inscription runs as follows:[277]

1) bhagavato ['*]rhataḥ candraprabhasya pratimeyaṃ kāritā ma-
2) hārājādhirājaśrī rāmaguptena upadeśāt pāṇipā-
3) trikacandrakṣa(mā?)[278]cāryyakṣamaṇaśramaṇapraśiṣyācā-
4) ryyasarppasenakṣamaṇaśiṣyasya golakyāntya[279]
satpūttrasya[280] celūkṣamaṇasyeti ||

This image of Lord Candraprabha the *arhat* was caused to be made by *mahārājādhirāja śrī* Rāmagupta under instruction from Celūkṣamaṇa, the worthy son of Golakyāntī, a pupil of *ācārya* Sarpasenakṣamaṇa (and) the pupil's pupil of *ācārya* Candrakṣamaṇa, the penitent *śramaṇa* (who was known as) *pāṇipātrika* (i.e., one who had taken a vow to eat and drink only with his hands).

This inscription is atypical in belonging to the Jaina faith rather than the Bhāgavata cult of the Gupta kings. And Rāmagupta's extirpation at the hands of Candragupta II soon displaced Jaina preceptors from the royal circle. At Udayagiri – a key site for Candragupta and the official cult – Jainism was relegated to a cluster of caves at the edge of the northern hill.[281] While these developments, and the place of Jainism in the religious constitution of the Gupta state, are beyond the scope of the present study, the Durjanpur inscriptions nonetheless remain our best direct evidence for the *ācārya* at the Gupta court. Attention to the details they provide is therefore essential. The nature of the activities recorded are not difficult to understand: the king commissioned three images under instructions from a religious teacher. The terminology provides insights into what took place and the relationship that existed between the king and his spiritual guide. Celū, the sage who instructed Rāmagupta, had *kṣamaṇa* as part of his name, an early monastic designation in Jainism. Celū's actual instructions are called *upadeśa*. This can denote teachings or advice of a general nature, but in the present context – the making of Tīrthaṃkara sculptures – it appears to refer to the special instructions the preceptor imparted to the king in the course of his initiation into the worship of the images in question.[282]

Celū presumed to give instructions to Rāmagupta in these matters because he belonged to an august spiritual line. The springhead of this tradition was Candrakṣamaṇa, a monk of exceptionally hard vows who probably lived in the first part of the fourth century. By invoking Candrakṣamaṇa and articulating his place in the line of spiritual descent, Celū was asserting that his sacred authority rested on a succession of teachers that reached back to a preceptor noted for asceticism. The understanding is that the pursuit of austerity – typically in the

forest away from settled society – was a means to rise above normal human conditions and possibilities. This idea is found in most Indian religions. The seeker who is diligent in his ascetic practice, unwavering in his dedication and firm in his vows – typically of celibacy – will surely obtain secret wisdom and contact with divine power. The concept is expressed by *tapas*, a kind of creative internal glow and spiritual radiance produced by self-denial. "This self (*ātman*)," the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3: 1: 5) declares, "can be grasped by truth (*satya*), by austerity (*tapas*), by knowledge (*jñāna*) and by celibacy (*brahmacarya*)."[283] The trope is well known, and there are many stories describing how individuals achieved their aims through asceticism and self-denial. In the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (1: 2), a king named Bṛhadratha went into the forest after installing his son on the throne. There he stood performing extreme austerity, keeping his arms erect, looking at the sun. After a thousand years, the sage Śākāyanya appeared and offered him a boon. Over and above any material benefit, Bṛhadratha insisted on sacred knowledge.[284] Everyone had the option to advance themselves in the same way – even demons were not excluded, as the tale of Sunda and Upasunda cited earlier readily shows.[285] So the assiduous *yogin*, no matter his affiliation, could acquire special insight, be granted boons, garner disciples, and establish a *guru-śiṣya* lineage.

The requisite characteristics of the *ācārya* and his relationship to his pupils are clarified in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*. Although this work belongs to the eleventh century and contains material unique to the Kula strand of esoteric Śaivism, the teacher-pupil relationship and the situation under which knowledge was to be handed down conform to long-standing conventions. As Gonda has remarked, "In maintaining that the really efficacious methods of salvation can be learned only by personal contact with a spiritual instructor the Tantrists do not in principle teach something new."[286] It is therefore not surprising that the *Kulārṇava* stipulates that without initiation (*dīkṣā*) there is no liberation (*mokṣa*) and that there is no *dīkṣā* without the *guru* or *ācārya*. The *ācārya* must be one of an uninterrupted succession of teachers. Without a preceptor, the sacred texts and *mantra*-s are fruitless. He must be thoroughly versed and completely experienced in Heilswahrheiten and Heilstatsachen. The pupil will, when duly qualified, obtain definite liberation after death.

While the means to liberation in the *Kulārṇava* is certainly different from that advocated in Jainism – as is the nature of liberation itself – the information included in the Durjanpur inscription shows that there were analogous preoccupations with the transmission of sacred knowledge in early Gupta times. The Toshām inscription underscores this point in a definitive way. The teachers in both records outline the religious lineages to which they belong and place a very holy person at the head of their respective traditions. They additionally name their mothers as a way of signalling their good birth.[287] Furthermore and finally, both inscriptions point back in time for additional authority: the

Sātvatas to uncounted forerunners (*anekapuruṣābhyāgata-*), the Jainas to their long series of quasi-historical Tīrthaṃkaras.

Through these public pronouncements, the teachers in our two inscriptions were asserting that they belonged to spiritual traditions of "high antiquity" and that they had the necessary authority to give trustworthy *upadeśa*. Now this *upadeśa* could be of three types: *karmopadeśa, dharmopadeśa,* and *jñānopadeśa,* that is to say, instruction in ritual conduct, right behaviour, and sacred knowledge.[288] In the case of the Durjanpur images, the *karmopadeśa* would have involved the veneration of the images commissioned by the king. This leads to an important and fundamental conclusion with regard to the *ācārya*: apart from any special sectarian insights which the *ācārya* might have had and taught, he was responsible for the relationship of his disciples with religious images.

## 3.7. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

With this understanding of the religious role of the *ācārya* in Gupta times, we can return to the four questions raised by the Bhitrī inscription at the beginning of this chapter, to wit: Who were the priests who officiated at Bhitrī? To what school or spiritual lineage did they belong? What was their relationship to the king and to other sacerdotal groups? What kind of rituals did they perform? To some extent we have already dealt with these questions in the foregoing discussion. To carry the argument forward and bring this section to a final close, I will provide a résumé of key findings, adding supplementary data where appropriate.

- *Who were the priests who officiated at Bhitrī?* Our first question centres on the priests who participated in the establishment of the image at Bhitrī and conducted the religious services in the temple. From the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* we know that several specialists would have been involved with the installation of the image. The *sthāpaka* – a "professional establisher" – was responsible for the physical placement of the image whilst an astrologer (*daivajña*) determined an auspicious time for the event.[289] They worked with a brāhmaṇa (*dvijavṛṣabha*) who performed a *homa* and recited *mantra*-s appropriate to the deity being installed. Varāhamihira's account of this brāhmaṇa shows that he was summoned to the site of a newly built temple as a specialist, not necessarily because he was a devotee of the god in question. This is clear from Varāhamihira's conclusion (*BS* 60: 19): "Learned men know that Bhāgavatas belong to Viṣṇu, the Magas to the Sun, the twice-born smeared with ash to Śambhu, those who know the rites of the *maṇḍala* to the Divine Mothers, learned seers to Brahman, the Śākyas to the all-benevolent Buddha whose mind is calm, naked mendicants to the Jinas; devoted to their respective deities, they should perform rites (*kriyā*) according to their own particular rules."

These statements show that after a temple image had been installed by various experts, the day-to-day worship was handed over to sectarian interests. The veracity of Varāhamihira's account is proven by the Proasat Pram Loven stone inscription of Guṇavarman, dateable to the fifth century. This records the establishment of a shrine to Viṣṇu's foot prints (*bhagavato bhuvi pādamūlam*) by brāhmaṇas who were versed in *śruti* and who knew the *Upaveda*, *Veda* and *Vedāṅga*.[290] Guṇavarman then assigned the things he had given to the god for the enjoyment of Bhāgavatas, sages, and the needy.[291]

That arrangements like these were operative in the heartland of Gupta power – and so also at Bhitrī – is shown by the Mandārgiri cave inscription. This mentions the *pādamūla* of Ārya Viṣṇudatta, son of Viṣṇuśarman of the Bhāradvāja *gotra*.[292] Of course, there is nothing to show that this preceptor or his affiliates worked in the Gupta court, but the inscription does demonstrate that there were Bhāgavatas in eastern India who could have served the purpose. The *pādamūla* at Mandārgiri included the *mūrti* of Virajoguhasvāmin – evidently the Narasiṃha in the cave where the inscription is found – as well as a shrine (*devakula*) and a hospice (*sattra*). This latter information is crucial because it supports the contention made in Section 2.6 that the *sattra* was connected with the temple and that it was an instrument through which the interests of temple-based theism were advanced in Indian society. The specific purpose of the Mandārgiri inscription was to announce that Viṣṇudatta's privileges (*vara*) were not to be disturbed, the point being that the operation of the shrine and *sattra* under Viṣṇudatta's guidance were sacrosanct. The same is implied if not stated at Bhitrī. When Skandagupta declares that he was giving a village to the deity, his reason for doing so was to guarantee religious services in the building under the guidance of Bhāgavata *ācārya*-s.

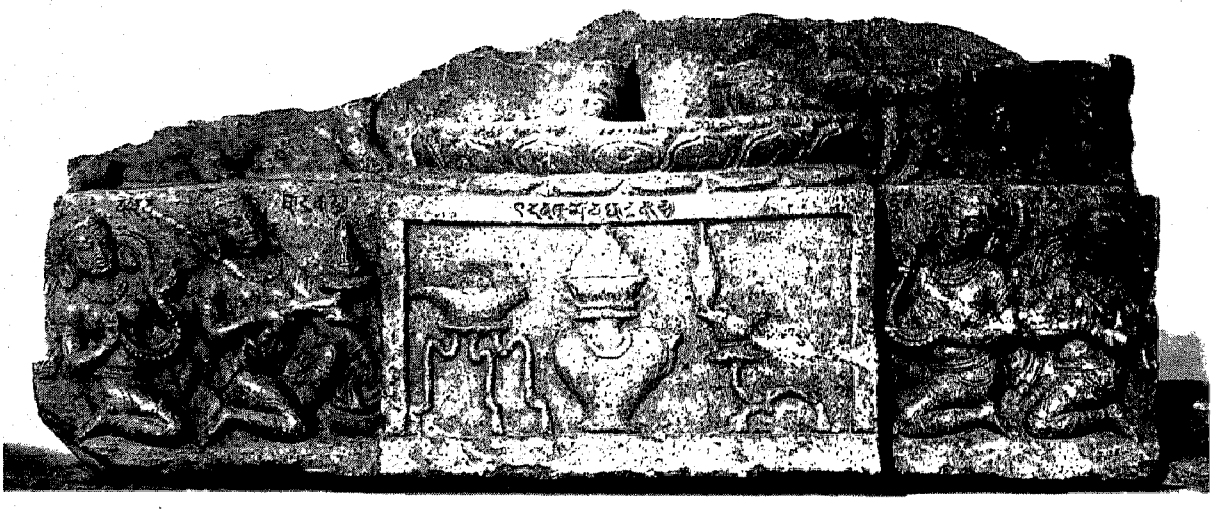
- *To what school or spiritual lineage did they belong?* The Bhāgavatas at Bhitrī would have conducted worship, as Varāhamihira says, according to their "particular rules." This means they would have been expected to have an organised religious system, including ritual texts like the *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*. The custodians of this literature and its applications would have been Bhāgavata preceptors in *guru-śiṣya* lineages akin to that recorded in the Toshām inscription. The lineage of the Gupta preceptors is a complete historical blank, but something of their religious vision is revealed by the Valkhā charters. As noted earlier, the oldest of these shows that Nārāyaṇa and his incarnations Narasiṃha, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma were the main gods of the cult. We will return to aspects of this religion when we consider the rituals that may have been performed.

At this point, it is worth making the supplementary observation that the Gangetic plain seems to have been a place of special importance for the development of image worship. This is suggested by charters mentioning the homeland of priests responsible for this style of worship. The Sohawal plates, for example, record that king Śarvanātha granted an estate to Viśākhadatta and Śakti, sons of Khāthānā of Uttarāpatha. This was done so they could maintain the services in a temple of Kārttikeya, which the king himself had built.[293] The

charter dealing with Śvetavarāhasvāmin, discussed at length in Chapter 2, is more specific. This records that Amṛtadeva, the priest who received the grant, was "a noble son of Ayodhyā" (*ayodhyakakulaputraka*).[294] These inscriptions show that those who conducted the worship of images hailed from the northern plains and that they were ready to travel great distances to advance the cause of temple worship. That ritualists from Ayodhyā enjoyed high status is demonstrated by the Karamdāṇḍā inscription. This recounts how a Gupta noble established a *liṅga* and arranged for its proper worship by priests from Ayodhyā.[295]

- *What was the ācārya's relationship to the king and to other sacerdotal groups?* The information given so far allows us to address our third question, namely the relationship of the Bhāgavata *ācārya* to the king and the other priests in royal service. This problem, like the others addressed in this summary, has already been answered in part. As we have seen, a salient feature of the *ācārya*'s religious role was his control of images and the relationship of devotees with those images. In the royal setting this meant that the *ācārya* functioned as the personal intermediary between the king and the god-within-an-image. This was a unique responsibility, quite different from other priests in the triumvirate: the cadre of Vedic specialists may have performed the king's sacrifices and the *purohita* protected them, but it was the *ācārya* who mediated the king's relationship with Viṣṇu as established and invoked in an actual living form. Taking this information to Udayagiri and the Bhāgavatism of the Gupta court, we can conclude that the *ācārya*'s special knowledge entitled him to guide the career of the king's soul as *paramabhāgavata* – the leader of the community of Vaiṣṇava faithful – a socio-religious role explored in Section 1.11. So although the *ācārya* is not actually represented at Udayagiri, any more than the other priests, his presence there is certain, and a place for him can be imagined. Some understanding of the relationship is provided by a sculpture from Bodhgayā. Although subsequent to the Gupta period, this shows a knelling prince with a censer, a depiction that invites a direct comparison to Candragupta II at Udayagiri (Figures 6 and 42). Vessels with other offerings are shown in the middle panel, while opposite is a bearded *ācārya*, the prince's spiritual guide.

  As at Udayagiri, what is being memorialised in the Bodhgayā relief is a king's performance of *pūjā*. The object of worship – in all likelihood a standing Buddha – has been broken away. Even though the disappearance of the image would have no doubt delighted Mīmāṃsakas who regarded image-making as fraught, this sculpture highlights the historical point that those in the religious service of the Gupta king had opposing views about the place and nature of the deity in the sacrificial act. These differences were fundamental, making tensions between the Bhāgavata *ācārya* and the *ṛtvij*-priests practically inevitable. The ways in which the king was supposed to ameliorate these conflicts is indicated in the *Arthaśāstra*. This stipulates that the only shrines warranting protection were those used by Brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda.[296] The *Arthaśāstra* being the *purohita*'s text, this represents his recommendation for dealing with potential problems at an early stage. Otherwise the *purohita* stood



42 Bodhgayā (District Gayā, Bihar). Pedestal of a sculpture showing worshippers and ritual objects, tenth century. *Photograph from the Cunningham collection, British Museum.*

to one side. Just as he interfered with Vedic sacrificial performances only when corrective or preventative measures were called for, so too he entered the *ācārya*'s domain only when things began to go awry. Thus, the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* reports: "When he notices an unfavourable change in a god, the *purohita*, ritually clean by fasting for three days and taking a bath, worships the image by bathing it and offering flowers, fragrant pastes and clothes."[297] These actions are a direct borrowing from the *purohita*'s role as the *brahmán* at the sacrifice. This highlights, above all else, the centrality of sacrifice in the religious discourse of the Gupta age. Indeed, the sacrifice explains the position of all priestly agents – whether *purohita*, *ṛtvij*, or *ācārya*. And it is the attempt by these members of the priesthood to control and define sacrificial hermeneutics that ultimately explains their relationship to each other.

The efficacy of the sacrificial act and its dependence on proper, complete and correct execution was not at issue. The concern was rather with unregulated ritual acts (i.e., those done without proper inspection and correction at every stage). Because ritual acts were a means of constituting reality – not simply decorative reflections of it – mistakes could have astonishingly dire consequences. This is shown most clearly by the *Mahābhārata*, the narrative core of which is a sacrifice gone horribly wrong, as van Buitenen has admirably explained. The Pāṇḍavas go into exile as a result of Yudhiṣṭhira's bad luck at dice, a game that had to proceed because it was part of Yudhiṣṭhira's royal consecration. Because Yudhiṣṭhira's luck does not hold, and more especially because a *purohita* did not intervene to correct the problem, the Pāṇḍavas head to the forest and conditions are set for a confrontation with the Kauravas. The final result, as everyone knows, was a blood bath of horrific proportions. This event was so cataclysmic that it heralded the beginning of *kaliyuga* – the dark age in which we live.[298] Because the epic was known in most parts of India

by the late fourth century, as shown by the copper-plate charters noted in Section 2.2, the lessons it taught on this particular point would not have been lost on learned men in the Gupta period.[299]

Despite the deplorable conditions brought about by the epic war, some kind of reprieve was deemed possible if only the necessary correctives could be found. In what is perhaps the first claim to bring back the happy days of yore, Pravarasena II (circa CE 419?-55) asserts in his inscriptions that he had "established the golden age (*kṛtayuga*) by the grace of Śambhu."[300] He was not alone in making this kind of assertion. The Maitraka ruler Dharapaṭṭa, a near contemporary, is recorded to have been "a most devout worshipper of the Sun who, by the water of his very pure actions washed away the stains of the Kali age."[301] In north India, the Bilsaḍ inscription of Kumāragupta I describes Dhruvaśarman, the donor of a *sattra* and builder of a temple gateway, as "a follower of the path of true religion and of the customs of the Kṛta age."[302] The implications of these statements are clear and important: the golden age can be brought back by worshipping images and supporting religious activities connected with them. The Gupta king as *paramabhāgavata* was effecting just this end through his worship of Viṣṇu. The representations at Udayagiri, like the inscriptions just cited, show that the medicine for curing the ills of *kaliyuga* came neither from the *purohita*, with his incantations and bag of magical tricks, nor from the *ṛtvij*-s, with their formidable yet antiquated ritual machine. Rather, regeneration was effected by holy men who, thanks to *yoga* and devotion, had a direct link to the redemptive power of god. So although the Bhāgavata *ācārya* followed Manu's pattern in his spiritual and social relationships – those outlined in Section 3.6 – he absorbed and surpassed the old Vedic paradigm. Standing above the sacrificial framework, this "new *ācārya*" derived authority from the highest possible source: Viṣṇu as the living embodiment of both Veda and sacrifice.

This hierarchy of knowledge, and so also the supremacy of the Bhāgavata *dharma*, is set out with special clarity in two sermons included in the later portion of the *Nārāyaṇīya* (*MBh* 12: 327).[303] Therein Vyāsa outlines two modes of life, the path of return and the path of liberation – *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. The gods perform sacrifices to Brahmā and he, pleased by this, decrees that they – and the men who follow their action and perform sacrifices according to Vedic injunction – will receive rewards appropriate to the religion of *pravṛtti*. This means heaven followed by rebirth in the world (*MBh* 327: 52). On the other hand, Sāṃkhyayogins who follow the religion of non-return or *nivṛtti* will attain *mokṣa* (*MBh* 12: 327: 61–76). These verses contrast *pravṛtti* – presided over by Brahmā and characterised by sacrifice – with *nivṛtti* – presided over by Nārāyaṇa. It is the path of *nivṛtti* that leads to liberation or *mokṣa*.

The second sermon attributed to Vyāsa makes similar points by emphasising the importance of Nārāyaṇa *bhakti* (*MBh* 12: 336). Those persons who are devoted to Nārāyaṇa have the quality of purity (*sattvaguṇa*) and will attain *mokṣa* through Nārāyaṇa's grace (*MBh* 12: 336: 61–70). But those whose natures are tainted by the *guṇa*-s of *rajas* and *tamas* follow the path of *pravṛtti*.

Brahmā watches over them, but Nārāyaṇa does not look upon them kindly (*MBh* 336: 71). This reveals that Brahmā's path of *pravṛtti* is that of *dharma*, *yajña*, and rebirth – the world of the sacrificial priests and the *yajamāna*, all of whom are concerned with outer endeavours and worldly ambition. Nārāyaṇa's *nivṛtti*, in contrast, is the path of *bhakti* and *mokṣa*. Those who pursue this path are *yogācārya*-s – like Yaśastrāta in the Toshām inscription – who look inward to the cessation of all activity through *sāṃkhya* and *yoga*. That this path expressly excluded blood-sacrifice is shown by the Poona plates of Prabhāvatīguptā. This grant was made to the Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* Canālasvāmin with the limitation that the village did not come with the right to perform or collect animals for sacrifice.[304]

The spiritual goal to which these Bhāgavatas aspired was a kind of sub-conscious oblivion, perhaps the *yoganidrā* mentioned in the Valkhā copper-plates. Its characteristics are clarified by Kauṇḍinya's commentary on *Pāśupatasūtra* (5: 40). His criticism reminds us that Bhāgavata *ācārya*-s did not enjoy spiritual hegemony and that even in the fifth century their privileged position was challenged by eminent Śaivas under Pravarasena II.[305]

> Those who reach release through Sāṃkhya and Yoga attain the supreme state – *kaivalya* – yet they are no longer aware of their own self or nor of another self, as if in a state of unconsciousness. But there is knowledge (*jñāna*) for him (who has attained the Pāśupata goal) since the *sūtra* says: "He whose vigilance does not fail shall attain the end of sorrow thanks to the grace of God."

- *What kind of rituals did they perform?* The relief at Udayagiri showing the Gupta king waving a censer before the image of Nārāyaṇa leads directly to our fourth and last problem, namely the nature of the rituals which the Bhāgavata *ācārya* and his followers – including the king – may have performed at Bhitrī. Based on the copper-plate charters, the details of which have been a recurrent theme in this book, we can safely assume that the regular cycle of worship would have included *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* as well as the offering of flowers, incense, lights, and garlands. These rituals were supported by endowments in almost every part of India during the Gupta period, so there can be little doubt that when Skandagupta gifted a village to the temple at Bhitrī, he wished regular offerings of this kind to be made there. Any doubt in the matter is removed by an imperial Gupta seal recovered at the site (Figure 19).[306] Although detached from the original plate, this seal shows that copper-plate charters were known at Bhitrī. Indeed the texts of many charters may have been composed at Bhitrī given the imperial nature of the location.

  In addition to regular offerings, we can attempt to understand the ways in which the image at Bhitrī was vivified and given over to Bhāgavatas for worship. As noted in Section 2.11 and again at the beginning of this chapter, the pillar inscription uses two terms to describe the image: *pratimā* and *mūrti*. The first word refers to a preliminary likeness, the second a consecrated living

divinity. The same terms are used among the Vaikhānasas, *pratimā* meaning an image or representation, *mūrti* an actual manifestation of the divine.[307] These meanings are elaborated in the Vaikhānasa theology of images: the god has both a lower form, which is concrete and manifest, and a higher form, which is sublime and limitless. The first takes shape as Viṣṇu's incarnations and is spoken of as "having parts" (*sakala*). The other is "without parts" (*niṣkala*).[308] The latter is immoveable and resides forever in the temple's sanctuary. The possibility that these distinctions were anticipated in the Gupta north is shown by a number of parallels between the events recorded in the Bhitrī inscription and the ritual sequence given in the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā*, a Vaikhānasa manual dealing with temples and images. The text, firstly, gives the following steps for making and consecrating an image:[309]

- To begin, the celebrant or *yajamāna* is given detailed instructions regarding the clay from which he will make the sculpture. After the clay has been dried, mixed with fragrant resins and so forth, the celebrant fixes the material on an armature; subsequently, he places jewels and ornaments at appropriate places on the body of the image. This work is to be done by the celebrant, but he can call on a craftsman to help bind the clay to the armature in a worthy manner and "to cause the limbs of the image to be made according to their characteristics."[310]
- Once these preparations are complete, the celebrant summons specialists to undertake the establishment and consecration of the sculpture; in this cadre are establishers (*sthāpaka*) who are responsible for setting up the image and Vedic priests (Hotṛ, Adhvaryu, etc.) who are chosen according to the offerings and oblations that have been planned. The celebrant also selects a teacher (*guru*). In seeking permission to proceed, the celebrant says, "I shall perform the sacrificial ceremony" (*devayajanaṃ karişyāmi*) and then applies himself to various penances. But the establishment, sacrificial oblations, and offerings are placed in the hands of the people he has selected.[311]
- The final step involves rituals that will make the image a suitable dwelling place for the god. At this point, the *guru* or preceptor comes to the fore: he makes the celebrant his pupil and performs a rite called the "opening of the eyes" (*akṣyunmeṣaṇam*), a crucial step in bringing the sculpture to life.[312] After the eyes are opened, the image is bathed, and the preceptor instructs the priests to perform their respective oblations. Finally the preceptor invokes the presence of Viṣṇu into a pot of water.[313] Then in a remarkably succinct passage, the text tells us what happens next: "He (i.e., the preceptor) should take the water which is in the pot and which contains his (Viṣṇu's) dynamic power, and mediating on the Lord with devotion, and on that water as being identical with the Lord of the gods, saying *idaṃ viṣṇuḥ* and *āyātu bhagavān*, he should cause it to flow on the head of the image saying "I invoke Viṣṇu."[314] And there is absolutely no doubt about the meaning of this act: "The Lord of gods pervades the immoveable image and stays in it."

This consecration, like much in the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā*, is presaged in the fourth-century *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. To be more precise, *VaiSS* (4: 10–11) gives the

same ritual sequence in a condensed form: the making of the sculpture, its bathing, the opening of the eyes, the invocation of the god into a pot of water, and the lustration of the image with the words, "I invoke Viṣṇu." And like the *KāśS*, each action is interspersed with fire oblations.[315] So despite a number of intricacies and digressions, the *KāśS* has the image made and consecrated in three basic steps, with different ritual actors taking the lead at appropriate moments. These traditions draw attention here not only because the terms *pratimā* and *mūrti* are used but because the organisational structure follows the actions outlined in the Bhitrī inscription. To summarise: in the *KāśS*, the celebrant, with the help of craftsmen, makes the image and decorates it with jewels. At Bhitrī, the celebrant (i.e., Skandagupta) makes the image. The Vaikhānasa material shows that there was a clear mandate for the patron's involvement and that the use of the active voice at Bhitrī was not coincidental. After the image is made, the *KāśS* prescribes that the celebrant should summon ritual experts to establish, bathe, and worship the image, the *guru* or *ācārya* opening the eyes and pouring a pot of water over the deity at the end of the process. At Bhitrī, the image is established. This use of the passive voice shows that Skandagupta delegated the consecration to specialists. Their action is held in the background because the inscription is a *praśasti*, composed to celebrate the deeds of Skandagupta, not those of others. But the *KāśS* and the Rāmagupta inscriptions – discussed earlier – show that the *ācārya* controlled the interface between the patron and the god-within-an-image. This means that although Skandagupta's *ācārya* is not specifically mentioned in the Bhitrī inscription, his presence there can be inferred from circumstantial evidence. And because these relationships can hardly have been invented by Skandagupta, the visual evidence at Udayagiri – by which I mean the king venerating Nārāyaṇa and Varāha – shows that a Bhāgavata *ācārya* was guiding royal worship there as well.

The *KāśS* also helps us understand why the Gupta kings decided to pursue these actions. The patron who establishes an image, the *KāśS* says, obtains many spiritual benefits as well as enjoyment and dominion. And after death he attains intimate communion with Viṣṇu.[316] The applicability of these ideas to the Gupta period, noted already in Section 2.10, is shown by the Allahābād pillar inscription that describes Samudragupta attaining the post-mortem state of a *puruṣa* (i.e., a Viṣṇu). We hasten to reiterate that these considerations do not show that the Vaikhānasas were working as ritualists in the Gupta realm. This possibility has already been considered and dismissed. What the parallels do show is that there were analogous traditions in north India that have not been preserved.

Side-stepping speculation about lost textual material and redundant traditions, the basic religious and archaeological fact remains that Skandagupta was attempting to develop a relationship with the god Śārṅgin by establishing a temple to him at Bhitrī. The literal meaning of Śārṅgin is "he who has the bow or *śārṅga*." Although the identity of this deity is not as clear as we might hope, in the context of the Vaiṣṇava cult of the Gupta court, and the building of a

temple by the king, the Śārṅgin at Bhitrī must have been some form of Viṣṇu. This supposition is supported by Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, which describes Viṣṇu as resting on Śeṣa and *śārṅgapāṇi* – "he in whose hand is a bow."[317] In the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, a text composed about twenty-five years after the Bhitrī inscription, Viṣṇu is also described as holding a bow in addition to his other weapons.[318] The Vaiṣṇava connection is made certain in an inscription that compares a temple built at Mandasaur to the *kaustubha* placed on Śārṅgin's chest. The *kaustubha* is a famous gem retrieved during the churning of the cosmic sea and thereafter used as Nārāyaṇa's chest-ornament.[319] The *Viṣṇusmṛti* develops these points in its praise of Nārāyaṇa: "You are beyond the cognisance of the senses; Your end is most difficult to know; You are brilliant; You hold the bow Śārṅga, You are Varāha, You are Govinda, You are of old, You are Puruṣottama" (*VSm* 1: 50–51). This is useful because it shows that a distinction was made between the incarnation holding the bow and Govinda (i.e., the cow-herd Kṛṣṇa).

That the bow-holding form of Viṣṇu was put to political use in Gupta times is shown by an inscription of Yaśodharman, which compares the king's arms to those of Śārṅgpāṇi.[320] The Bhitrī inscription demonstrates that Skandagupta was not averse to developing the comparison. In one of the verses, now lamentably damaged, we read of Skandagupta's encounter with barbarian invaders: "when he had come into contact with the Hūṇas, with his two arms, in battle, the earth quaked; causing terrible whirlpools among his enemies . . . arrows . . . proclaimed . . . noticed in their ears as if it were the twanging of bows".[321] Although the purport of this passage is not entirely clear, the slaying of Hūṇas, the shooting of arrows, and the twanging of bow-strings leaves little doubt that Skandagupta was making a direct connection between himself and the bow-holding god he had installed in the temple. Furthermore, Skandagupta publicly advertised his prowess as an archer by minting gold coins on which he is depicted holding a bow.

From the perspective of medieval times, it seems fairly obvious that Rāma is the subject of these references and metaphors. While this is not exactly certain from the Gupta sources alone, an inchoate Rāma cult under Skandagupta seems demonstrated by the Supiā inscription that praises Skandagupta as "equal to Rāma in righteous conduct."[322] That Rāma was actually worshipped, as opposed to appearing simply in narrative contexts, is shown by the Valkhā plates. These present Viṣṇu as an object of adoration in several guises including "the slayer of Daśavadana."[323] As with all the references given here, Rāma is not mentioned by name. But the description of Viṣṇu as the slayer of the ten-headed Rāvaṇa can only be Rāma. From the ninth century onward Rāma is shown carrying a bow, and the currency of this iconography in earlier times is shown by a relief in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, which depicts Rāma seated in a rocky landscape with a bow over his shoulder.[324] Around him are monkeys, so there is no doubt about the identity of the main human figure. In the *KāśS*, Rāma is described as "black of colour, with two arms, holding a sharp arrow in his right hand and a bow in his left, being adorned with the crown and all other

ornaments."[325] These features meant that Rāma was well suited to political allegory because he is the one incarnation of Viṣṇu that is both a king and a human being.[326] This potential is explicitly developed in the *KāśS* that states that he who desires mastery over the whole earth should establish an image of Rāma.[327] That Skandagupta had this intention is indicated by the way he pointedly describes himself as "two-armed" (*bāhubhyām, dorbhyām*). This is the most distinctive iconographic feature of Rāma and one that sets him apart from the four-armed Kṛṣṇa.[328] As we have just seen, an explicit distinction between Rāma and Kṛṣṇa is made in the *Viṣṇusmṛti*. Given that Skandagupta is credited with moving the Gupta capital to Ayodhyā, a city traditionally associated with Rāma, the Bhitrī *praśasti* would appear to be a harbinger of the wide use of the Rāma *avatāra* for political ends in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[329] But this takes us to the end of the temple tradition rather than its beginning. The key point for our concerns is that the Bhitrī inscription draws parallels between Rāma and Skandagupta.

The religious issues discussed in the foregoing paragraphs have not been adequately synchronised with the archaeology of Bhitrī. The pillar has been the focus of archaeological attention since the nineteenth century when Cunningham cleared debris from around its base. On Cunningham's recommendation, the area was explored by Mr. Charles Horne.[330] Horne's report, summarised by Cunningham, tell us only that he found some pillars and other fragments reused in newer buildings, and that the mounds consisted of nothing but brick bats when he cut trenches into them.[331] Cunningham does not mention that Horne returned to England with sculptures from Bhitrī. These were given to the India Museum in London and later transferred to the British Museum.[332] The most interesting piece is a weather-worn Vaiṣṇava head (Figure 43). This belongs to the fifth century and is stylistically related to the sculptural fragments recovered from the temple site. The head lacks the high crown normally accorded to Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa and has no third eye. These overtly human characteristics suggest that this is, in fact, the head of the image of Śārṅgin made by Skandagupta.

The relationship of this sculpture to the temple is naturally unclear because it was not excavated in situ. A general understanding is nonetheless possible as a result of the excavations conducted by Krishna Kumar Sinha between 1968 and 1973.[333] This work revealed that the temple was a large brick structure constructed in three phases during the fifth century. The building had a relatively short life, being abandoned in the circa sixth century. That the structure was built in phases is verified by the site's epigraphic material. A number of bricks, first noticed in the nineteenth century, are inscribed with the words *śrīkumāraguptasya*, indicating the original building was constructed between circa CE 414 and 447, the reign-period of Kumāragupta.[334] Skandagupta followed Kumāragupta, ruling *circa* CE 456–67, so his pillar and image were added some ten

43 Bhitrī (District Ghazipur, UP). Vaiṣṇava head, fifth century. *India Museum Collections, British Museum (1880. 17).*

years later. This means that Skandagupta made additions to a pre-existing temple and that the Śārṅgin was a subsidiary image. This point is actually evident from the text of the inscription that represents Skandagupta as reflecting on the *kīrti* of his father Kumāragupta. As noted in Section 2.11, where the relevant verses are discussed at length, the word *kīrti* refers to both Kumāragupta's worldly fame and to his temple.

Skandagupta's preoccupation with fame and its perpetuation were not unique. The first indication of these concerns appears in the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta, which describes the pillar as an "arm of the earth," which proclaims the fame of Samudragupta even though he has departed from this world.[335] The ideas are elaborated in the iron-pillar inscription at Mehrauli, a record of special relevance to this study because the pillar, as pointed out in Section 1.12, seems to have been originally set up at Udayagiri. The relevant verse is as follows.[336]

> [khi]nnasyeva visṛjya gāṃ narapater ggām āśritasyetarāṃ
> mūrtyā karmmajitāvaniṃ gatavataḥ kīrtyā sthitasya kṣitau [|*]
> śāntasyeva mahāvane hutabhujo yasya pratāpo mahān
> nādyāpy utsṛjati praṇāśitaripor yyatnasya śeṣaḥ kṣitim [||*]
>
> The residue of the king's effort – a burning splendour which utterly destroyed his enemies – leaves not the earth even now, just like (the residual heat of) a burned-out conflagration in a great forest.

> He, as if wearied, has abandoned this world, and resorted in actual form to the other world – a place won by the merit of his deeds – (and although) he has departed, he remains on earth through (the memory of his) fame (*kīrti*).

These lines yield slightly awkward English, but the basic ideas are clear enough: Candragupta may have passed away, but the legacy of his achievement is so great that he seems to remain on earth by virtue of his fame. Emphasis is placed on Candragupta's conquest of enemies and the merit of his deeds, ideas that are also found in coin legends: *kṣitim avajitya sucaritair divaṃ jayati vikramādityaḥ*, "Having conquered the earth with good conduct, Vikramāditya conquers heaven."[337] The king's conquest of heaven combined with the description of him resorting to the other world in bodily form confirms our understanding of the worthy dead as autonomous theomorphic entities, a subject discussed in Section 2.10.

That the temple at Bhitrī was part of this culture of death and heroic memory is shown by Skandagupta's decision to transfer the merit of his religious activities to his deceased father Kumāragupta. Although I am distressed to find myself in agreement with Bhandarkar, his suggestion that the eponymous name of the deity was "Kumārasvāmin" seems justified.[338] An interesting problem is created by the reconstruction nonetheless. The verse in the Bhitrī inscription mentioning Skandagupta and his prowess as an archer is placed at the close of the royal eulogy, immediately before the factual account of the Śārṅgin image. And it is Skandagupta, as we have seen, who describes himself as two-armed and who depicts himself as an archer on coins. So it seems contradictory that the image should be eponymously named Kumārasvāmin when it was so closely tied to Skandagupta in meaning and iconography. We might be tempted to question Bhandarkar's reconstruction on this evidence, but Skandgupta's deference to his father and the increasing importance of memorials to the dead in Gupta times militates against this doubt. A solution to the conundrum is provided by the synonymy of Kumāra and Skanda. Both are names of Kārttikeya, the implication being that the difference between Kumāragupta and Skandagupta was negligible and that the two kings were being conflated or at least closely compared. Skandagupta pursued this course to manufacture and assert legitimacy, a particular anxiety in view of his illegitimate birth and violent usurpation of the Gupta throne.[339] The conflation of royal identities, elaborated in the emerging Vikramāditya legend, has its origin with Candragupta I who anachronistically assumed the name of India's first imperial sovereign. This continued with Candragupta II whose dramatist set the *Mudrārākṣasa* in the Mauryan court and whose sculptors made a copy of a Mauryan lion capital at Udayagiri (Figure 9). Kumāragupta continued the conflation of names with the iron-pillar inscription. The scholarly debate over the precise identity of "King Candra" in this record

is, in my view, not only a problem of historical distance but the result of a deliberate attempt to mingle personalities and so project a sense of royal continuity.[340] That images as well as words could have several meanings is shown by the Varāha at Udayagiri, a problem addressed in Chapter 1. An added complexity is created at Bhitrī by Śārṅgin's secondary position in the temple precinct. The main image has disappeared, but it was undoubtedly some form of Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa. Established by Kumāragupta, it may have served as his special object of religious devotion and a memorial image after the king's death. Skandagupta's additions to the site thus introduce a divine hierarchy: the main god in the inner sanctum and a secondary form in a subsidiary shrine. The simultaneous appearance of Viṣṇu in two places can be understood through the Vaikhānasa ritual vocabulary noted above: the main image was *niṣkala* – the undifferentiated form of the godhead lodged in the inner sanctuary – while the Śārṅgin was *sakala* – the active and differentiated form of the deity in the outer shrine.

Death and the ephemeral nature of existence raise problems of continuity and of memory, especially for families in positions of power. This problem – hardly unique to India – was addressed by the Guptas through *kīrti*. If a king was charismatic, effective, and powerful – and if his successors could perpetuate his *kīrti* and add to it – the continuity of the dynasty was more or less assured. So at least was the working theory. The durability of the king's fame, and the reputation of his family, rested on the public memory of his greatness. Wandering bards sang the king's praises in different parts of the realm and reminded the people of the king and his achievements. But in an empire of unprecedented size, communication presented difficulties. The Guptas and their subordinates addressed the problem of consistency and continuity of communication by mobilising Sanskrit learning and by using monuments to externalise and fix memory. I will close with a brief consideration of these two points.

The development of new genres in Sanskrit and the use of Sanskrit for inscriptions co-opted brāhmaṇas and their impressive culture of memory to the Gupta imperial project. These traditions of memory were endorsed by perpetual endowments to brāhmaṇas, sometimes large groups of them, showing that kings were effectively establishing "colleges" for Sanskrit learning within their territories. The people in these establishments produced literatures that reflected the culture of courtly life, but their primary purpose was rather more sober and practical: they were the knowledge-holders par excellence, responsible for the moral, legal, and religious order of the society around them. Beyond supporting brāhmaṇical memory through endowment, kings externalised and extended memory – both temporally and spatially – through physical objects. Coins showing horses were minted so they could circulate beyond the immediate social and geographical sphere of the horse-sacrifice; stone statues of horses were carved to serve as permanent reminders of sacrifices performed in the past;

eulogies were written down and incised on stone so they would endure long after the singing was done. In the Gupta period, as before, fame depended on the king's performance of appropriate deeds. But personal acts – incumbent on every king as a matter of course – were supplemented by physical memorials designed to provide an enduring foothold for fame. To put the matter another way, the acts that traditionally generated fame – heroism in battle, noble conduct, generosity to brāhmaṇas, and the performance of transformative rites – were supplemented by the creation of fame-producing monuments. The Kahāum inscription describes the pillar on which it is cut as a "creator of fame" (*kīrtikartṛ*), that is, a material object that, by its mere physical presence, generated fame. So in addition to acts of old, monuments were built as autonomous fame-making machines. In the case of temples, perpetual endowments guaranteed the performance of *pūjā* through time and thus the accretion of fame to the temple's patron. Although we might judge this construct harshly as post-reformation commentators, time has proven its efficacy. The early temples of the Gupta period may be in ruins, their endowments sequestered and their rituals in abeyance, but somehow we remember them. The remains and inscriptions hold our attention, prompting us even now to remember the people who made them. More especially we remember the priests whose special knowledge made it possible and whose desire to implement their vision transformed the religious and political life of India for centuries to come.

APPENDIX I

# ASTRONOMY AND UDAYAGIRI

Serena Fredrick

This appendix addresses a number of technical and scientific issues raised by the discussion of the Indian calendar and related mythology in Chapter 1.

## Movement of the Tropics

The Tropic of Cancer is the line on earth where the sun appears directly overhead at noon on the June solstice. Its southern counterpart, the Tropic of Capricorn, is the line on earth where the sun appears overhead at noon on the December solstice. North of the Tropic of Cancer the sun does not rise high enough in the sky to appear directly overhead and an equivalent situation occurs in the southern hemisphere. The tropics currently lie at about 23° north and south of the equator, but they are not stationary. Due to the precession of the earth's axis, the tropics gradually move closer together and then further apart within a timescale of about 26,000 years. The Tropic of Cancer is currently at a latitude of 23° 26′ 18″, but it varies between 23° 20′ ±1° 20′. The Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn were at their furthest distance from the equator about 9,500 years ago. The tropics are presently at their average distance from the equator and are moving towards the equator at a rate of just less than 1′ (60″) every hundred years. In practical terms this means the Tropic of Cancer is moving south and has been doing so for most of the historical period.

Using this data, it is a relatively straightforward matter to calculate how the Tropic of Cancer has moved during the past two thousand years. The latitude of the site at Udayagiri is 23° 32′ 11.1″, and it can be seen from the map that the Tropic of Cancer would have been directly on the site in about CE 1300 (Figure 14). The monumental remains at Udayagiri date from around CE 400, but the Tropic of Cancer would have been north of the site at that time. This would have made relatively little difference on the ground however: shadows cast at

noon on the summer solstice at Udayagiri would have been quite small, probably only slightly bigger than the ones cast today.

## MOVEMENT OF THE SUN

The position of the rising and setting sun moves not only during the course of the year but also on a much longer timescale. This timescale corresponds to the movement of the tropics just discussed. One inscription at the site gives a specific date in CE 401, and calculations show that the sun would have moved about 13′ 20″ in the 1,600 years since that time. The apparent diameter of the sun in the sky is about 32′, so the sun rises about half its diameter further south now than it did in CE 401. This means that in CE 401 at the summer solstice, when the sun rose at its most northerly point, slightly more sunlight would have shone along the passage and illuminated the reclining Viṣṇu at dawn than at present.

The exact position of the rising sun in relation to the reclining Viṣṇu (Figure 13) was probably an important element in the ritual observations of the fifth century. It thus appears that the way in which the upper wall of the passage has been cut down and squared-off (Figure 7) represents a deliberate attempt to guarantee that the full orb of the sun was visible at the appropriate time (i.e., that full orb of the rising sun at the solstice shone on the sculpture).

## ECLIPSES

In the *Mudrārākṣasa* – the play discussed at length in Chapter 1 – the Prologue describes how the play's Manager returns home to discover that preparations are being made for a festival. His enquiries lead to the following conversation:[1]

MANAGER: Tell me the reason (for the festival preparations).

ACTRESS: Because they say the moon is to be eclipsed.

MANAGER: Lady, who says so?

ACTRESS: Such indeed is the talk among the townsfolk.

MANAGER: Lady, I have spent some labour on the science of astronomy with its sixty-four branches; let, therefore, your preparation of meals in honour of the worthy priests proceed; as for the eclipse of the moon you are deceived by someone. For see – that well-known Ketu, malignant planet of malicious resolve, wishes, perforce, to attack Candra, the moon, having a full orb – but the union [i.e., the presence of] Budha – the planet Mercury – saves him.

KING'S MINISTER FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Who is he that, while I live, wishes to overpower Candra?

MANAGER (LISTENING): Ah I see, it is Kauṭilya, [the minister] of crooked intellect, who burnt up the Nanda race in the fire of his wrath. Having heard the words *"candrasya grahaṇaṃ* – the seizure of the moon" – he understands that there will be an attack by the enemy on the moon-like Maurya king who bears the name Candra – moon. But away – let us go from here.
End of the Prologue.

In this dialogue the king's minister understands the Manager's statement politically: Who of wicked resolve, accompanied by Ketu, wishes to attack king Candra whose full orb of sovereignty is now fully established? In the Minister's mind, Ketu is not the invisible planet that causes the eclipse but the enemy king named Malayaketu.

The Manager mentions Budha (Mercury) because the proximity of this planet was alleged to prevent eclipses. This view is rejected by the early sixth-century author Varāhamihira (see Kale, notes) and this perhaps hints that the play predates him.

These questions raise the issue of eclipses and their timing as a way of determining the date of the events described (i.e., specific astronomical events at the time of the Guptas).

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon is directly between the sun and earth, preventing the light from the sun from reaching a small area on the earth. A lunar eclipse is slightly different because the moon does not generate any light of its own, and what we see on earth is only what it reflects from the sun. When the earth is directly between the sun and moon, the only light that reaches the moon is that light that is bent around the earth by our atmosphere. The effect of this is that the light reflected by the moon is a red colour because it has been distorted by the atmosphere of the earth. This is known as a lunar eclipse. Because the position of the sun, moon, and earth is known in detail, it is possible to calculate when eclipses took place in the past. By knowing only a few details about the position of the sun and moon and the location of a site – such as Udayagiri – it is possible to calculate when eclipses occurred. Of course these eclipses will be of interest if the site was in use at the time in question. One Web site provides the relevant information regarding the position of the sun and moon and what kind of eclipse it would have been at the time (Espenak 2004).

In most cases, lunar eclipses were probably observed. By its nature, the solar eclipse can only ever be seen on a very small piece of land, whilst lunar eclipses are visible on the whole night-side of the earth. Although solar and lunar eclipses occur with about the same frequency, lunar eclipses are much more commonly seen on earth. For this particular site, lunar eclipses at the turn of the fourth century CE took place on the following dates: 07 February 399, 22 June 400, 17 December 400, 12 June 401, 06 December 401. Using the Web site

created by John Walker it is possible to view a computer-generated image of what the night sky would have looked like at the time of all these eclipses (Walker 2003). The eclipse in June 401 is actually very close to the date of the inscription at the site, but it would *not* have been visible from Udayagiri as the moon was about 50° below the horizon at the time of the eclipse. Although a couple of the other eclipses would have been visible from the site, it is the one that took place on 17 December 400 that is of most interest. An eclipse at this time would have been of importance because it is around the time of the winter solstice. This particular eclipse also took place when the moon would have been very high in the sky, at an altitude of about 85° (very close to the zenith point of 90°) from the point of view of someone at Udayagiri, and Jupiter also would have been very close to the moon. These three things – the proximity of the Moon to the zenith, its occurrence less than five days before the winter solstice, and Jupiter's closeness to the moon – all suggest that any culture aware of the night sky and its movements, would have found this eclipse especially significant. The eclipse would have taken place in the middle of the night (about 12:30) and lasted approximately forty minutes. Therefore it is not unreasonable to suggest that this may have been the eclipse that inspired the opening statement in the *Mudrārākṣasa*.

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APPENDIX II

# MEAN ANNUAL RUN-OFF INTO THE UDAYAGIRI TANK

John Sutcliffe

From the contour survey of Udayagiri hill that was prepared in 2005 (given here in simplified form in Figure 3), I undertook to calculate the volume of the tank at the southern end of the northern hill and to measure the area that is likely to drain to this tank.

The area and volume of the tank were measured from an enlargement of the map at a scale of 14.0 cm = 100 m or 1 cm = 7.14 m. This is equivalent to a scale in terms of area of 1 $cm^2$ = 51.0 $m^2$. The areas at each contour level were measured on transparent squared paper and converted as follows.

| Contour Level (m) | Area ($cm^2$) | Area ($m^2$) | Cumulative Area ($m^2$) |
|---|---|---|---|
| <109 | 0.30 | 15.30 | 15.30 |
| 109–110 | 2.45 | 124.95 | 140.25 |
| 110–111 | 5.35 | 272.85 | 413.10 |
| 111–112 | 6.40 | 326.40 | 739.50 |
| 112–114 | 13.85 | 706.35 | 1445.85 |
| TOTAL | 28.35 | | |

The volume of the tank up to the 114 m contour, as shown in the table, is about 3,124 $m^3$.

The area draining to this tank from the hill above was drawn on the contour map printed on a smaller scale of 4.7 cm = 100 m, or 1 cm = 21.28 m. This is equivalent to 1 $cm^2$ = 452.7 $m^2$. The precise catchment area is somewhat uncertain, but there is a reentrant shown running from the tank towards a square platform about two-thirds of the way to the temple marked towards the northern limit of the hill (see Figure 3).

If one draws a line from the top of this reentrant towards the square platform, the area draining to the tank would be about 26.75 $cm^2$ on the map, or about

12,110 $m^2$ on the hill. If one took a conservative estimate to the top of the cliff above the tank, the area would be about half this area (i.e., 6,000 $m^2$). On the other hand, it might be possible to extend the catchment up to the temple, using a diversion canal along the top of the western slope of the hill; this would give an additional 19.1 $cm^2$ of catchment, or 8,647 $m^2$, to give a total of 20,757 $m^2$. Thus the area draining to the tank could be as little as 6,000 $m^2$ or 20,700 $m^2$ with a diversion.[1]

The rainfall at Vidishā averaged 1,334 mm between 1926 and 1975; the runoff from this rainfall could be as high as 80 percent, or one metre, bearing in mind the steep nature of the catchment and the rocky nature of the site under study. Evidence from the Betwā basin as a whole suggests that a conservative estimate of run-off from this rainfall would be 0.50 m.

A combination of the most conservative estimate of the catchment area, and a conservative estimate of the run-off, suggests that the tank should fill to the 114 m contour level in an average year. That this contradicts the field evidence during the monsoon is perhaps due to the fact that the sealing of the tank has been affected by interference with the confining embankment.

# NOTES

## Introduction

1. The inscriptions are dealt with in J. F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and Their Successors*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1888), hereinafter CII 3 (1888). Some of the records are re-edited, often with mischievous results, in the revised edition, D. R. Bhandarkar et al., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 3 (revised) (New Delhi, 1981), hereinafter CII 3 (1981).
2. The main sources are D. R. Patil, *The Monuments of the Udayagiri Hill* (Gwalior, 1948); Debala Mitra, "Varāha Cave at Udayagiri – An Iconographic Study," *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 5 (1963): 99–103; J. C. Harle, *Gupta Sculpture* (Oxford, 1974): Figures 8–17; Phyllis Granoff, "Mahiṣāsuramardinī: An Analysis of the Myths," *E&W* 29 (1979): 139–51; J. G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province* (Princeton, 1982): Figures 35–39. M. A. Dhaky et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture: North India, Foundations of North Indian Style* (New Delhi, 1988): Figures 15–16.
3. A start on the Paramāra period is made in my "Inscriptions from Udayagiri: Locating Domains of Devotion, Patronage and Power in the Eleventh Century," *SAS* 17 (2001): 41–53; the ancient material is explored in Meera I. Dass and M. Willis, "The Lion Capital from Udayagiri and the Antiquity of Sun Worship in Central India," *SAS* 18 (2002): 25–45.
4. Robert W. Preucel and Ian Hodder, *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory: A Reader* (Oxford, 1996): 396–97.
5. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley, 2006): 18 and 511–24.
6. Ibid., 9.
7. Edwin Gerow, Review of Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Oxford, 1998) in *JAOS* 120 (2000): 664.
8. The exclusive focus on literary sources leads to the problems we find in Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 279, where three axioms, based on Samudragupta's Allahābād inscription, are given for understanding the relationship of the king and god. These

axioms are dealt with here in Chapter 1, notes 196 and 199 and in Chapter 2, note 355.

9. R. Inden, "The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being," in *Text and Practice: Essays on South Asian History*, with an introduction by Daud Ali (Delhi, 2006): 196–97.
10. How far we can get or not get is masterfully shown in Edwin Gerow, "India as a Philosophical Problem: McKim Marriott and the Comparative Enterprise," *JAOS* 120 (2000): 410–29.
11. Fred Virkus, *Politische Strukturen im Guptareich*, Asien- und Afrika-Studien der Humboldt-Universität, Bd 18 (Wiesbaden, 2004).
12. I have dealt with the historiography of the "golden age" in my "Later Gupta History: Inscriptions, Coins and Historical Ideology," *JRAS* 15 (2005): 131–50.
13. Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1988).
14. R. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford, 1990), Chapter 6, summarised in Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas: Kashmir as Vaiṣṇava Center of the World" in *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (Oxford, 2000): 24–25. I have elsewhere signalled the limitations of the model, see my review of *Querying the Medieval* in *SAS* 17 (2001): 213–17.
15. Sheldon Pollock, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300–1300 CE: Transculturation, Vernacularization and the Question of Ideology" in *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*, edited by Jan E. M. Houben (Leiden, 1996): 200 (his italics).
16. For further problems, see Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge, 2004): 15–17.
17. Pollock, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis," 197, and *Language of the Gods*, passim, but notably p. 512 where he dismisses Sanskrit as a language of communication because there is "no direct evidence that Sanskrit was ever used to fulfil these needs outside certain scholastic and liturgical environments." Yet if ritual communication means political communication (compare, say, the suppression of the Latin Mass in Protestant England), then the use of Sanskrit in liturgical environments is one of its most important roles.
18. Edwin Gerow, "What Is *Karma* (*Kiṃ Karmeti*)? An Exercise in Philosophical Semantics," *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 87–116.
19. Inden, *Imagining India*, passim.
20. James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State* (Delhi, 1997), especially pp. 234–35 where the issue of agency in Indian history is addressed.

## Chapter 1. The Archaeology and Politics of Time at Udayagiri

1. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (3: 76), edited by Patrick Olivelle as *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* (Oxford, 2005). An earlier and shorter version of this chapter, representing my formative thoughts on the themes discussed, appeared in *The Vākāṭaka Heritage*, edited by Hans T. Bakker (Groningen, 2005): 33–58.
2. A different view in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Figure 39.
3. On shell inscriptions, see Richard Salomon, "New Sankalipi (Shell Character) Inscriptions," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 11–12 (1986): 109–52. Claims about decipherment must be discounted, see Salomon, "A Recent Claim to Decipherment of the Shell Script," *JAOS* 107 (1987): 313–15; Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy* (Oxford, 1998): 70.

4. Other views in Hans T. Bakker, "Religion and Politics in the Eastern Vākāṭaka Kingdom," *SAS* 18 (2002): Plate 1 and Julia Shaw, *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India* (London, 2007): 150, Plate 56.
5. Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," pp. 25–45. Some material has been repeated here because the present discussion needs to be self-contained and would be unintelligible without the relevant data. I have also used this opportunity to correct typological errors, to rectify conceptual and factual mistakes, and to add significant new material, particularly with regard to astronomical matters.
6. The slab is published in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Figure 42, the capital in Williams, "A Re-cut Aśokan Capital and the Gupta Attitude towards the Past," *Artibus Asiae* 35 (1973): 225–40; the capital is, in fact, not recut, a point taken up in Section 1.10.
7. General introductions can be found in G. R. Kaye, *Hindu Astronomy*, MASI, no. 18 (Calcutta, 1924); more recently and technically Roger Billard, *Astronomie indienne*, Publications l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. 83 (Paris, 1971). The basic guide is David Pingree, *Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1970–94); more concisely S. N. Sen, *A Bibliography of Sanskrit Works on Astronomy and Mathematics* (New Delhi, 1966). For Vedic textual background, see Jan Gonda, *Prajāpati and the Year*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Reel 123 (Amsterdam, 1984). The only work I have found that combines astronomy and art history, deals with a later period. It is E. Parlier-Renault, "Chemin des dieux et chemin des ancêtres: La déambulation rituelle autour du temple hindou," *Asie* 5 (1998): 9–25.
8. The editions are listed in Pingree, *Census*, 5: 539–40 and discussed in G. Thibaut, "Contributions to the Explanation of the Jyotiṣa-Vedāṅga," *JASB* 46 (1877): 411–37, reprinted in *Studies in the History of Science in India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi, 1982): 479–502; more recently Pingree, "The Mesopotamian Origin of Early Indian Mathematical Astronomy," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 4 (1973): 1–12. The conclusions offered have, however, been subject to a severe and justified critique, see Harry Falk, "Measuring Time in India and Mesopotamia," *ZDMG* 150 (2000): 107–32. The *Jyotiṣavedāṅga* is preserved in two recensions (Yajus and Ṛk). The astronomical elements of the *Paitāmahasiddhānta* are the same as the *Jyotiṣavedāṅga*; it perhaps belongs to the first century CE and was summarised in the early sixth century by Varāhamihira in *Pañcasiddhāntikā*, see Pingree, *Census*, 4: 259; an archaic astronomy is also given in the *Sūriyapaṇṇatti* (Skt *Sūryaprajñāpti*) the particulars of which are discussed in Thibaut, "On the Sūryaprajñāpti," *JASB* 49 (1880): 107–27 and 181–206. This Śvetāmbara text was probably put in its present form after the sixth century CE.
9. Cited Jan Gonda, "Pratiṣṭhā," in *Selected studies*, 6 vols. (Leiden, 1975), 2: 349. The relevant text can be found in *Aitreyabrāhmaṇa with commentary of Sāyaṇa*, edited by Satyavrata Sāmaśramī, 4 vols., Bibliotheca Indica, new series (Calcutta, 1895–1906) 2: 23–24. Vāgbhaṭa's medical analysis of the six seasons and two halves of the year, with corresponding humors, is elegantly explained in Dominik Wujastyk, "Agni and Soma: A Universal Classification," *Studia Asiatica* 4 (2004): 347–69.
10. *Arthaśāstra* (2: 20: 41): *āṣāḍhe māsi naṣṭacchāyo madhyāhno bhavati*, "in the month of Āṣāḍha there are no shadows at midday."
11. Early references to the *Arthaśāstra* in other works are noted in Hartmut Scharfe, *Investigations in Kauṭalaya's Manual of Political Science* (Wiesbaden, 1993): 1–5.
12. The middle of the passage at Udayagiri is located at N 23° 32′ 11.1″ and E 77° 46′ 20.1″. As is clear from Figure 14, the Tropic would have stood on the hill in the late

thirteenth century. I am grateful to Serena Fredrick who carried out the calculations and contributed Appendix I.

13. Personal communication with Dr. Ishwar Dass, an Indian Civil Service officer of long experience.
14. The shadow would not have been exactly the same length as the object or instrument because on the winter solstice the sun is lower than 45° due to the value of the obliquity of the ecliptic. The problem is explained in James B. Kaler, *The Ever-Changing Sky* (Cambridge, 1996): 60, for which reference I am grateful to Dr. Silke Ackermann at the British Museum. In Gupta times and for practical purposes, however, it seems these tiny variations, if noted, did not influence calculations.
15. Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," pp. 39–41.
16. Devices are discussed in S. R. Das, "Astronomical Instruments of the Hindus," *IHQ* 4 (1928): 256–69, and more recently in Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, "Indian Astronomical and Time-measuring Instruments, A Catalogue in Preparation," *Indian Journal of History of Science* 29.4 (1994): 507–28 dealing primarily with early modern rather than ancient examples. More useful and dealing with the circa fifth to twelfth centuries, is Yukio Ōhashi, "Astronomical Instruments in Classical Siddhāntas," *Indian Journal of History of Science* 29. 2 (1994): 155–313.
17. A detailed analysis of the months and fortnights in relation to the iconography of these pieces is reserved for a future time. This would be tied to the observation of the moon and stars from Udayagiri now impeded by the endemic air pollution of north India.
18. J. F. Fleet, "The Ancient Indian Water Clock," *JRAS* (1915): 213–30. Material also in R. N. Saletore, *Life in the Gupta Age* (Bombay, 1943): 106–08. Possible origins of the clepsydra are outlined in A. J. Turner, *The Time Museum; Time Measuring Instruments: Water-Clocks, Sand-Glasses, Fire Clocks*, vol. 1, part 3 (Rockfort, 1984). Chinese clocks are discussed in J. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge, 1970) 3: 15–26. The historical perspective in Needham's analysis is distorted: although data has been assiduously collected, archaic and vague textual descriptions (all basically undateable) are prioritised to stress the high antiquity of the Chinese tradition. It is impossible to judge the relative importance of the clocks Needham describes as no account is given of their location, their cultural purpose, or the agenda of the texts that record the devices in question. The oldest description of the overflow-tank clepsydra dates only to about 540 CE, ibid., p. 324.
19. The seventh-century water clock at Asuka in Japan had not been discovered when Fleet wrote. For a concise illustrated account, *The Birth of Nippon: The Asuka and Fujiwara Capitals* (Tokyo, 2002): 69–71; it was first built in 628 according to Shigeru Nakayama, *A History of Japanese Astronomy* (Cambridge, 1969): 10. The Japanese clock was not set on a hill like Udayagiri, but it did involve stepped tanks with water flowing from one level to the next. Stone tanks for water, set on a hill, were found nearby at Sakafune-ishi, ibid., pp. 60–1, but their function is not certain; they may have been part of a royal garden. My visit to the site with Motoko Miyazaki was facilitated by Hiromitu Wasizuka and Ryoji Kajitani at the Nara National Museum to whom many thanks are due. The clock was introduced into Tibet, possibly from China, where it is termed *chu tshod*, literally a "water-measure." Could this be a translation of a Chinese term that also lies behind the Japanese *rōkoku*? The ubiquity of clocks in the Buddhist setting is shown by Yijing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religions as Practiced in India and the Malaya Archipelago (AD 671–695)* (London, 1896, reprint. ed. Delhi, 1998): 144–45. The pilgrim describes the "sinking-bowl" type of water-clock, which operates differently from the "stepped tank" or

"out-flow" type. In the sinking-bowl type, a small bowl with a pin-hole is placed in a tank of water; the time it takes for the small bowl to fill and sink determines a segment of time (normally 24 minutes). Yijing describes such clocks, and the boys employed to run them, as the "gifts of kings of many generations."

20. Sang-woon Jeon, *Science and Technology in Korea: Traditional Instruments and Techniques* (London, 1974): 54–56 provides a parochial survey. The clepsydra is preserved at the Chŏndŭng Temple, Kangwha Island; it is thought to date to the Silla period. The bowls (ibid., Figures 1.14–15) are made of granite, the larger one measuring 39 cm in outer diameter and 30.5 cm in height; the smaller is 43 cm in outer diameter and 26 cm in height.
21. Cunningham, "14. Udaygiri or Udayagiri," *ASIR* 10 (1874–77): 56. He only notes the dimensions and the fact that it "must have been quarried on the spot." The foundation on which this trough is standing shows that it is most probably in its original position.
22. For the background of Nidrā or Ekānaṃśā, see André Couture and Charlotte Schmid, "The Harivaṃśa, the Goddess Ekānaṃśā, and the Iconography of the Vṛṣṇi Triad," *JAOS* 121 (2001): 173–92.
23. The Garuḍa iconography is assessed in Ellen M. Raven, *Gupta Gold Coins with a Garuḍa-Banner*, 2 vols. (Groningen, 1994). The text of the seal illustrated here is given in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
24. The identifications are partially based on the *Devīmāhātmya*; the secondary literature is summarised by Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, pp. 46–47. The difficulty with the use of this text as a "literary source" for the iconography is shown in Adalbert J. Gail, "Āyudhapuruṣa: Die Anthropomorphen Waffen Viṣṇus in Literatur und Kunst," *Indologica Taurinensia* 8–9 (1980–81): 181–85; the third weapon is clearly Viṣṇu's bow and not the *śaṅkha* given in the *Devīmāhātmya*. Additionally V. V. Mirashi, "The Lower Limit for the Date of the Devī-Māhātmya," *Purāṇa* 6 (1964): 181–86 points out that the inscription of CE 608, which is often used to provide a lower date for the *Devīmāhātmya*, more probably belongs to the ninth century. The evidence for a mid-eighth-century date for the text is effectively argued in Yuko Yokochi, *The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India: A Study of the Myth Cycle of Kauśikī-Vindhyavāsinī in the Skandapurāṇa* (Groningen, Rijksuniversiteit Ph.D. thesis, 2004): Chapter 1, n. 42. Epigraphic sources of the fourth century list Viṣṇu's weapons as conch, arrow, spear, discus, the Nandaka sword, mace, and javelin; the relevant inscription is given in Section 1.11.
25. Observations on the spot showed that, even with the modern shed in place, the image of Nārāyaṇa is illuminated by the sun during the week around the solstice day. The way the south wall of the passage has been cut in stepped notches (Figure 7), eliminating portions of the big shell letters in the process, shows that changes have been made to allow the sun to strike the image at sunrise on the solstice. That changes were made with this intention is shown by the fact that the position of the sun rising on the eastern horizon has changed over time: just as the Tropic moves, so too does the position of the rising sun. The change amounts to about 0.0002 degrees per year; the maximum northward declination of the sun was reached in about 4,000 BCE. Historically speaking, however, the shift has been slight: in 401 CE the position of the rising sun would have been about 0.32 degrees further north than today, an amount that would appear as less than one width of the sun to a terrestrial observer. With the rising sun practically in the same place as now, it is clear that, even in the Gupta period, the rock would have to have been modified for the passage to have "worked" in the appropriate way. As my purpose

here is to demonstrate a principle rather than provide all the detailed calculations, I leave the particulars to future scholars. Turning to specific features that can be observed, I would draw attention to the two shallow squares cut into the floor of the passage directly in front of the Nārāyaṇa niche; these show that pillars stood here and probably supported a modest porch sheltering the image; this has inspired the reconstruction given in Figure 13.

26. Fleet, with characteristic genius and brevity, was the first scholar to note the point, see CII 3 (1888): 77, n. 5. Attendant beliefs and festivals, to which we will return, are noted in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht, 1954): 89–91.
27. *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, edited by Reinhold Grünendahl, 3 parts (Wiesbaden, 1983–89) 1: 34 (*adhyāya* 7), where the *varṣāmāsavrata* performed during the rainy season is described.
28. Varāhamihira, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, with English translation by M. Ramakrishna Bhat, 2 vols. (Delhi, 1981–82) 1: 361 (44: v. 1). The festival in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (Chapter 153) is partially dealt with in Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas" in *Querying the Medieval* and in Sanderson, "Religion and the State: Śaiva Officiants in the Territory of the King's Brahmanical Chaplain," *IIJ* 47 (2004): 257. S. C. Mukherji, *A Study of Ancient Vaiṣṇavism in Ancient and Medieval Bengal* (Calcutta, 1966): 15 refers to *utthānaikādaśī* and *śayanaikādaśī* as important sectarian Vaiṣṇava festivals in Bengal, and I am told by friends in Calcutta that they are still actively performed. Contemporary practice adds to our understanding of the texts, see B. A. Gupte, *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials* (Calcutta-Simla, 1919): 27–30 for the beliefs surrounding the festival in the early twentieth century; a more recent account is Stanley and Ruth Freed, *Hindu Festivals in a North Indian Village* (Seattle, 1998): 165–71. The festivals are important in Nepāl, see Mary Anderson, *The Festivals of Nepal* (London, 1971): 176–79, which gives a description of the waking of Viṣṇu with many interesting details; the maintenance of the association of Sūrya and Nārāyaṇa is especially notable. This festival is also mentioned in Michael Hutt et al., *Nepal, a Guide to the Art and Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley* (Stirling, 1994). In popular calendars, the day is referred to as *deva śayanī*; the waking day in Kārttika is termed *devuṭhanī*. Pdt. Bābulāl Caturvedī, *Bhuvanavijaya paṃcāṅga* (Jabalpur, 2003). This is one of the many calendars commonly available in north India.
29. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilisation*, 2 vols. (1965–83) 1: 435–38; V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 5 (Ootacamund, 1963): 7–8, hereinafter CII 5 (1963); Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Vākāṭakas: Sources and History* (Delhi, 1997): 9. The Riddhapur plates record a grant on the same day, see Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 35–37; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 439–42; Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, pp. 20–21. Further implications are explored in Section 3.6.
30. E. Hultzsch, *Kalidasa's Meghaduta with the Commentary of Vallabhadeva* (London, 1911): 2–3 (verse 2). A rich controversy surrounds the reading and exact day mentioned in verse 2, see Walter Harding Maurer, *Sugamānvayā Vṛtti: A Late Commentary in Jaina Sanskrit on Kālidāsa by the Jaina Muni Sumativijaya*, 2 vols. (Poona, 1965): 2: 12–14 and 2: 219–21.
31. Hultzsch, *Kalidasa's Meghaduta*, 56 (v. 107, in other versions 2: 50). Vallabhadeva, who lived in the tenth century, gives the same day as the Poona plates in his commentarial gloss: *kārttikaśukladvādaśyāṃ bhujagaśayanāc cheṣatalpād utthite śārṅgapāṇau harau mama śāpānto bhaviṣyati*. Translations are very many; here we use that prepared by Jaffor Ullah and Joanna Kirkpatrick and published electronically.

32. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 74–76; also Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 399–405. The dates of Kumāragupta are taken up in my "Later Gupta History," *JRAS* 15 (2005): 131–50.
33. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 75 (lines 20–21): *kārttikasya māsasya . . . nidrāvyapāyasamaye madhusūdanasya kāle.*
34. N. N. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology: The Inverted Pantheon* (Delhi, 2000): 162–63. The account in the *Matsya Purāṇa* (170: 1–30) is the same as that in the *Harivaṃśa*, 155.
35. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 25 *saṃvatsare* 80 [+] 2 *āṣāḍhamāsaśuklaikādaśyām.*
36. Summarising scholarly opinion, D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy* (Delhi, 1965): 287 states that the Gupta era started on Caitra śudi 1 and that the months are *pūrṇimānta*. This means "ending with the full moon," (i.e., that calculations begin with the new moon). The Parivrājaka plates from central India show that the *pūrṇimānta* system was used for Gupta years, while the Sārnāth Buddha inscription of anno 157 indicates the years were expired. The problem and its history are skillfully reviewed in P. L. Gupta, *The Imperial Guptas*, 2 vols. (Varanasi, 1974–79) 1: 206–18. Fleet's view (in CII 3 [1888]: 127) that the Gupta calendar began on or about 9 March 319 is indeed correct as the new moon fell on that day or the night before; the full moon occurred on 21 February 319. So after a great deal of fuss and spilt ink, the old master is shown right once again! S. R. Goyal, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (Allahabad, 1967): 104 stated "the Gupta year (expired) commenced either on February 26, 320 AD or on December 20, 318 AD." I have not traced the source for this, but the same appears again in P. L. Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, 1: 218–19. Anand M. Sharan and R. Balalsubramaniam, "Date of the Sanakanika Inscription and Its Astronomical Significance for Archaeological Structures at Udayagiri," *Current Science* 18.11 (2004): 1542–66 have argued that the Udayagiri date corresponds to 26 June 402, but their calculation is based on the faulty assumption that the date must be that closest to the solstice in 401–02 rather than determined from the known start-date of the Gupta calendar.
37. *Arthaśāstra* 1: 19 provides rules for the king and names the players who would have been present. First, the day is divided into parts by means of *nālikā*-s or by the measure of the shadow: *nālikābhir ahar aṣṭadhā rātriṃ ca vibhajec chāyāpramāṇena vā* (*AŚ* 1: 19: 6). The term *nālikā* refers to a pipe, likely a bamboo tube, and thus to the "outflow" type of water-clock discussed previously. By extension, the term is used to designate a measure of time (about 24 minutes) and the *nālikādaṇḍa* in *Kātyāyana Śulbasūtra* (1: 7: 8) accordingly means a "gnomon," see Falk, "Viṣṇu im Veda," in *Hinduismus und Buddhismus: Festschrift für Ulrich Schneider* (Freiburg, 1987): 125. In the first book of the *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya divides the day into eight parts and then prescribes various duties; at the end of the day, he says that the king should worship at twilight (1: 19: 17). During the night, also divided into eight parts, the king should take his meal, bathe, study, rest, and so on. After being woken, he should, in the seventh and eighth parts of the night (i.e., toward the end of the night) consult with his councillors, get blessing from his sacrificial priests, preceptor and *purohita*, and see his physician, chief cook, and astrologer. *AŚ* (1: 19: 23): *aṣṭame ṛtvigācāryapurohitasvastyayanāni pratigṛhṇīyāt, cikitsakamāhānasikamauhūrtikāṃś ca paśyet*. So the situation is remarkably clear: We have the requisite time-keeping equipment and all the courtly players assembled together in a text that was current in the Gupta period. The king worshipping at twilight would have meant, when we take this to Udayagiri, that he was engaged in worship as the waxing moon shone down on him. The corresponding date and hour are shown in Figure 20. The cook and physician are a curious combination to modern eyes, but they were closely

related in their concerns and duties, see Dominik Wujastyk, *The Roots of Ayurveda: Selections from Sanskrit Medical Writings*, revised edition (New Delhi, 2001): 181–89.

38. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35.
39. M. B. Garde, "Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 524," *EI* 27 (1947–48): 12 (line 2): *navoditaścandra iva*. An emended reading of the first five verses is given in Hans T. Bakker, "A Theatre of Broken Dreams: Vidiśā in the Days of Gupta Hegemony" in *Interrogating History: Essays for Hermann Kulke*, edited by Martin Brandtner and Shishir Kumar Panda (Delhi, 2006): 182, n. 16.
40. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 6 (line 15): *śaśikaraśucayaḥ kīrttayaḥ*; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 278, but better Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 297 (line 3): *kṣityambare guṇasamūhamayūkhajālo nāmnoditas sa tu ghaṭotkacaguptacandraḥ*. Ghaṭotkaca (fl. circa CE 448–54) was on the throne just prior to Skandagupta, see Hans T. Bakker, "Theatre of Broken Dreams," 172–78 and my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
41. M. R. Kale, *Mudrārākshasa of Viśākhadatta with Commentary of Ḍhuṇḍirāja*, 6th ed. (Delhi, 1976): 3 and especially p. 5 of his notes where the pun is explained with the help of Ḍhuṇḍi's commentary. The date of the drama is taken up below. As noted by Kale, the king's effective construction of a *maṇḍala* of power and its comparison to the full moon appears also in the *Nītisāra* (8: 3): *rocate sarvabhūtebhyaḥ śaśīvākhaṇḍamaṇḍalaḥ | sampūrṇamaṇḍalas tasmād vijigīṣuḥ sadā bhavet*, "he [namely the king with an effective circle of power] pleases all beings like the full moon. So a *vijīgīṣu*, a king desirous of conquest, should always foster a complete circle of power." The constituent parts of the circle are given in *Nītisāra* 4: 1. On the matter of eclipses, it is worth noting that a full eclipse of the moon took place on 17 December 400 – close to the winter solstice – and this may have been the eclipse that inspired the opening statement in the *Mudrārākṣasa*. See Appendix I.
42. Pierfrancesco Callieri, *Seals and Sealings from the North-West of the Indian Subcontinent and Afghanistan* (Naples, 1997): Plate 57, Catalogue U 7.3. N. Sims-Williams (ibid., 308–09) provides a reading of the Bactrian inscription: *sasorēo iaštoo algo*, "Sas-re(w) the leader of worship (?)." This as a Bactrian rendering of the socio-religious concept, not an exact translation which could be explained using philological methods.
43. Illustrated in my "Religious and Royal Patronage in North India" in *Gods, Guardians and Lovers*, edited by Vishaka Desai and Darielle Mason (New York, 1993): 55, Figure 18.
44. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 3: 6): *kālasvarūpaṃ viṣṇoḥ*. The date of the *VP* is taken up in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 5 vols. (Poona, 1930–62) 5: 909. For the conflation of mythic and mundane time in the epic, see Georg von Simson, "Narrated Time and Its Relation to the Supposed Year Myth in the Mahābhārata," *Composing a Tradition: Concepts, Techniques and Relationships, Proceedings of the First Dubrovnick International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, August, 1997*, edited by Mary Brockington and Peter Schreiner (Zagreb, 1999): 49–66.
45. Charles Malamoud, "Remarks on the Brahmanic Concept of the Remainder," in *Cooking the World* (Delhi, 1998): 18–19. The texts quite explicitly tell us that all leftovers, every remainder, belongs to Viṣṇu, see Falk, "Viṣṇu im Veda," 118; further discussion of Śeṣa can be found in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 149–50.
46. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 108, 162–63.
47. Also illustrated with surrounding rock-face in Bakker, "Religion and Politics in the Eastern Vākāṭaka Kingdom," *SAS* 18 (2002), Plate 1. A comprehensive account of Narasiṃha myths are given in D. A. Soifer, *The Myths of Narasimha and Vāmana* (Albany, 1991): Chapter 5.

48. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 151, 163. The name Hiraṇyakaśipu ("he who has a golden pillow") is not easy to explain; perhaps it is related to the cushions on which the *yajamāna* is expected to sit at the *rājasūya*.
49. Ibid., p. 102. The currency of the story of Diti and her offspring in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka cultural formation is shown by a direct reference to it in the Kevala Narasiṃha inscription, see Hans T. Bakker, *The Vākāṭakas: An Essay in Hindu Iconology* (Groningen, 1997): 145; also of note is the fact that Govindagupta, a son of Candragupta, is compared to sons of Diti and Aditi in the Mandasor stone inscription of Mālava year 524, see Garde, "Mandasor Inscription": 15 (line 4) with emendations in Bakker, "Theatre of Broken Dreams," 182.
50. The twelve Ādityas are Viṣṇu, Śakra, Aryaman, Dhṛti, Tvaṣṭṛ, Pūṣan, Vivasvat, Savitṛ, Mitra, Varuṇa, Aṃsa, and Bhaga; the Ādityas occupy the orb of the sun and support his chariot in each month, see V. C. Srivastava, "Purāṇic Records on Sun-Worship," *Purāṇa* 11 (1969): 232. As an aside, we might note that given the association of Viṣṇu with the sun, the several small images of Viṣṇu in the passage, now much damaged, might be Vaiṣṇava versions of the Ādityas and thus represent the months. This connection with the Ādityas was first suggested to me by Dr. Meera I. Dass. The connection of the Ādityas with the sun and the yearly cycle was carried into later Pañcarātra tradition: S. Gupta, "Empirical Time and the Vyūhāntara Gods of the Pañcarātra," in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honor of J. C. Heesterman*, Memoirs of the Kern Institute, no. 5, edited by A. W. Van den Hoek, D. H. A. Kolff and M. S. Oort (Leiden, 1992): 164–78.
51. John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśāṅka, King of Gauḍa* (London, 1914): 34–35: *kṣitim avajitya sucaritair divaṃ jayati vikramādityaḥ*, "Having conquered the earth with good conduct, Vikramāditya conquers heaven." The title *vikramāditya*, which is not without its own difficulties as a compound, perhaps reflects the ideal attributes of the king in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 11): *yasya prasāde padmā śrīr vijayaś ca parākrame | mṛtyuś ca vasati krodhe sarvatejomayo hi saḥ*, "He in whose gracious gift abides the lotus-coloured goddess of good fortune, in whose prowess abides victory, in whose anger abides death – for he is made from the energies of them all." A link between Candragupta and this text is reinforced by the very rare coins (only two examples known) carrying the legend *parākrama*, see A. S. Altekar, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire* (Varanasi, 1957): 142 and S. R. Goyal, *An Introduction to Gupta Numismatics* (Jodhpur, 1994): 65, for which references I am grateful to Shailendra Bhandare, Ashmolean Museum. Under Kumāragupta, the special relationship of the Guptas with Narasiṃha is clearly stated in coins bearing the legend *sākṣād iva narasiṃho siṃhamahendro jayaty aniśam*, "the lion-king who resembles Narasiṃha is ever victorious"; Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, 77.
52. A line of investigation worth pursuing but left for a future time is whether the opposition of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Āditya can also be linked to astronomical phenomena such as the eclipse of the sun; see comments in Appendix I.
53. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3: 1: 7): *ṣaḍ ete manavo 'tītāḥ sāmprataṃ tu raveḥ sutaḥ | vaivasvato 'yaṃ yasyaitat saptamaṃ vartate 'ntaram*, "these six Manus have passed away [i.e., the ones presiding over earlier ages which have been mentioned in previous verses]. The Manu presiding over the seventh aeon, the present period, is Vaivasvata, son of Ravi." The deities, sages, and so on of the present age of Vaivasvata are taken up in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3: 1: 30–34). Unsurprisingly, the presiding deities of each period ultimately depend on Viṣṇu (*VP* 3: 1: 35) as indeed do the Vedas and the sun itself (*VP* 2: 11: 6–11).

54. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 315 (line 13): *paritoṣān mātaraṃ sāsranettrāṃ hataripur iva kṛṣṇo devakīm abhyu[peta]ḥ.*
55. Ibid., p. 317, n. 1; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 323, n. 2.
56. Bakker, "Theater of Broken Dreams." The place of Ghaṭotkaca is shown in the genealogical chart in Bakker, "Religion and Politics," 18; I have returned to the chronological issues in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
57. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 143, 163.
58. *Harivaṃśa*, edited by P. L. Vaidya, 2 vols. (Poona, 1969–71): Canto 25.
59. The Dhruvadevī episode is summarised in Bakker, "Theatre of Broken Dreams"; also Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 223–36. The interpretation of the episode offered here is supported by Viśākhadatta's use of planets to make punning references to members of court in the prologue of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, a point that has already drawn our attention. The *Nītisāra* (8: 2) also compares the king to the moon and, in a reference that reminds us of Kālanemi, states that a king with an incomplete circle of power will be worn away like a chariot wheel. As to the constant reappearance of demons, Giovanni Verardi makes a case for their being heterodox groups challenging Brahmanical supremacy; see Verardi, "Images of Destruction: An Enquiry into Hindu Icons in Their Relation to Buddhism," in *Buddhist Art 1: Papers from the First Conference of Buddhist Studies Held in Naples in May 2001* (Kyoto, 2003): 1–36.
60. The phrase "passage of time" I owe to Dr. Meera I. Dass with whom I have discussed the iconography of the passage in detail.
61. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 and here following the reconstructed portions given in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 255–56 with changes, some suggested by Hans Bakker and Whitney Cox to whom many thanks are due. The reading checked against the original that has flaked slightly toward the end of the verse since the nineteenth century. Vīrasena describes himself as a poet in subsequent verses of the same inscription. The inscription is *anuṣṭubh* throughout, a metre that sacrificial texts assign to Viṣṇu; see Harry Falk, "Viṣṇu im Veda," 117, n. 18.
62. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 5–6): *yasmād eṣāṃ surendrāṇāṃ mātrābhyo nirmito nṛpaḥ | tasmād abhibhavaty eṣa sarvabhūtāni tejasā || 5 tapaty ādityavac caiva cakṣūṃṣi ca manāṃsi ca | na cainaṃ bhuvi śaknoti kaścid apy abhivīkṣitum || 6*, "Since the king is constituted from the particles of these powerful gods, the king surpasses all beings in lustre. He burns (their) eyes and minds like the radiant sun and no one in this world can look upon him." An argument can be made for placing the *Mānavadharmaśātra* in the fourth century; see Section 3.4. Like Manu, Kālidāsa describes the king as the essence of existence and an embodiment of light, *Raghuvaṃśa*, edited by V. P. Joshi (Leiden, 1976) (1: 29): *taṃ vedhā vidadhe nūnaṃ mahābhūtasamādhinā | tathā hi sarve tasyāsan parārthaikaphalā guṇāḥ.* Other instances are noted in J. D. M. Derrett, "Bhū-bharaṇa, bhū-pālana, bhū-bhojana: An Indian Conundrum," *BSOAS* 22 (1959): 113, n. 7.
63. To use the terminology of the Udayagiri inscription of Vīrasena for world conquest: *kṛtsnapṛthivījayārthena*, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35. We may also note the coins of Candragupta with the legend *cakravikrama*. A. S. Altekar, *Catalogue of Gupta Coins in the Bāyaṇā Hoard* (Bombay, 1954): 112 and Plate X. By styling himself *cakravikrama*, Candragupta was identifying himself simultaneously with Viṣṇu and with the paramount sovereign as *cakravartin*. The coin-type and its significance have been discussed by Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 136–37.
64. The *rājasūya* is taken up in Section 1.11.
65. The key iconographic study is Mitra, "Varāha Cave at Udayagiri," 99–103. The image has been reproduced frequently. Useful views for this discussion are

in Harle, *Gupta Sculpture* (Oxford, 1974): Figures 12–15 and Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, Plate XLVI.

66. *Matsya Purāṇa* (248: 64–78).
67. Varāhamihira, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (56: 3–8) in the chapter entitled *prāsādalakṣaṇādhyāyaḥ*, the "characteristics of temples." Here I have borrowed from the translation offered in *H. Kern Verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1913–18) 2: 40–41. Varāhamihira flourished between CE 505 and 587, see Bhāu Dājī, "Brief Notes on the Age and Authenticity of the Works of Āryabhaṭṭa, Varāhamihira, Brahmagupta, Bhaṭṭotpala, and Bhāskarācārya," *JRAS* (1865): 407.
68. *Bhagavad Gītā* (11: 12): *divi sūryasahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā | yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ*; (*BhG* 11: 17): *tejorāśiṃ sarvato dīptimantam | paśyāmi tvāṃ durnirīkṣyaṃ samantād dīptānalārkadyutim aprameyam*; (*BhG* 11: 19): *anantabāhuṃ śaśisūryanetram | paśyāmi tvāṃ dīptahutāśavaktaṃ svatejasā viśvam idaṃ tapantaṃ*. R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Oxford, 1969): 307 notes that the moon represents the god's grace, the sun his wrath; the fire of time consumes the world at the end of each world-aeon. Note also *Matsya Purāṇa* (248: 65) where Varāha is said to have a formidable form, full of lustre like the sun, lightning, and fire (*bhīmaṃ . . . vidyudagnipratīkāśam ādityasamatejasam*). Epic theophany is examined in James W. Laine, *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna, 1989).
69. *Bhagavad Gītā* (11: 20): *dṛṣṭvā 'dbhutaṃ rūpam ugraṃ tavedaṃ lokatrayaṃ pravyathitaṃ*. For a masterful summary of the *BhG*, its tenents and interpretation, see John Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden, 1998): 267–77. Although the *BhG* describes the universal form of Viṣṇu, which is not found at Udayagiri, the point is that the images at the site have to be taken together and not analysed as isolated pieces in a museum cabinet.
70. Georg Berkemer, "The 'Centre out There' as State Archive: The Temple of Siṃhācalam" in *The Sacred Centre as a Focus of Political Interest*, edited by Hans T. Bakker (Groningen, 1992): 121.
71. Illustrated in Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," Figure 10.
72. J. Eggeling, "An Inscription from Badâmî," *IA* 3 (1874): 305–06; James Burgess, *Report on the First Season's Operations in the Belgâm and Kaladgi Disticts*, Archaeological Survey of Western India (London, 1874): Plates XXV and XXX; Inscription: Plate XXXII; James Burgess, "Rock-cut Temples at Bādāmi," *IA* 6 (1877): 363 (line 11): *tasmin mahākārttikapaurṇamāsyām brāhmaṇebhyo mahāpradānan datvā*. This probably took place in the early hours of 1 November 578 as the full moon set at 7.00 A.M. local time that morning. It may be noted that the moon on this day was north of the sun's ecliptic, just as it was in 401 at Udayagiri.
73. The identity of the seated figure is generally regarded as problematic: R. D. Banerji, *Bas Reliefs of Badami*, MASI, no. 25 (Calcutta, 1928): 36. At Udayagiri, as noted in Section 1.5, the waking hours were represented by Narasiṃha. This explains why the Narasiṃha at Bādāmi stands facing Vaikuṇṭha at the opposite end of the veranda. Illustrated in Burgess, *Report of the First Season's Operations*, Plate XXIX; also Banerji, *Bas Reliefs*, Plate XVIII. At the Gupta temple at Deogarh, a seated Vaikuṇṭha is shown over the door flanked by Vāmana and Narasiṃha.
74. J. D. M. Derrett, "Bhū-bharaṇa, bhū-pālana, bhū-bhojana," 110–11 for the connection between serpents, the earth, the rains, and the king.
75. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 4: 3–11). An analogous but brief account of Varāha, appearing at the beginning of each former *kalpa*, is given in the *Viṣṇusmṛti* (1: 2), translated by Julius Jolly in SBE, vol. 7 (Oxford, 1880): 1. In *Vāyu* the form of Varāha is described

as the embodiment of time: *kṛtaṃ tretā dvāparaṃ ca kaliś caiva caturyugam*, see V. Raghavan, "Yajña-Varāha – Some More Material," *Purāṇa* 6 (1964): 202–03.

76. K. P. Jayaswal, "Candragupta and His Predecessor," *JBORS* 18 (1932): 17–36.
77. The historiography of the Rāmagupta question is outlined by Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 226, n. 2. He notes that the first scholar to reconstruct the Rāmagupta episode was R. D. Banerji in 1924; also see A. S. Altekar, "A New Gupta King," *JBORS* 14 (1928): 223–53 and Altekar, "Further Discussion about Ramagupta," *JBORS* 15 (1929): 134–41. Jayaswal seems to have been the first to make an association with Udayagiri.
78. Jayaswal, "Candragupta," 33–35. It is beyond the scope of the present essay to revisit Jayaswal's understanding of Viśākhadatta's *śleṣa*-s.
79. V. S. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa – A Study* (Varanasi, 1963): 333–35. These portions were published simultaneously and verbatim by Agrawala in "Yajña-Varāha – An Interpretation," *Purāṇa* 5 (1963): 199–236. Agrawala's views on the Udayagiri sculpture as geo-political allegory are first hinted at in "Gupta-yuga meṃ madhyadeśa kā kalātmaka citraṇa," *Nāgarī pracārinī patrikā* 48 (VS 2000): 43–48 and "Gupta Art," *JUPHS* 18 (1945): 107–08. In his *Gupta Art* (Lucknow, 1948): 7–8 Agrawala states that the representation of Gaṅgā and Yamunā at Udayagiri "probably conveys an ideal representation of the Middle Country, the Madhyadeśa, which was the heart of the culture empire founded by the Guptas." The same ideas appear again in V. S. Agrawala, "Art Evidence in Kālidāsa," *JUPHS* 23 (1949): 84 and finally, from even beyond the grave, in Agrawala's posthumous, *Gupta Art* (Varanasi, 1977): 30 where he wrote: "Here we have charming portrayals in which ideas of geography and mythology are blended in [a] happy and graphic manner. The rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the two arteries of Madhyadeśa, seem to have been adopted as the visible symbols par excellence of the homeland of the rising powers of the Guptas in the reign of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya."
80. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa*, 333–34; Agrawala, "Yajña-Varāha," 234–35. Additions to the textual aspects of the problem are given in V. Raghavan, "Matsya-Text Relating to Yajña-Varāha," *Purāṇa* 5 (1963): 238–42.
81. Jayaswal explicitly argued that the term *deva* was used by Candragupta, see his "The Book on Political Science by Śikhara, Prime Minister of Chandra-Gupta II," *JBORS* 18 (1932): 37.
82. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 52, n. 2.
83. Ibid., 224, n.2. The inscription, of course, is not actually on the Varāha cave.
84. Ibid., 226, n. 2, where Jayaswal's article of 1932 is cited.
85. S. V. Sohoni, "Varāha Avatāra Panel at Udayagiri, Vidiśā," *JBRS* 57 (1971): 49–56.
86. Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 43–46.
87. Mitra, "Varāha Cave at Udayagiri,"
88. Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 45, n. 76.
89. Ibid., 46. The question of the divine king in South East Asia has, of course, been subsequently revisited and revised; something of the issue is taken up toward the end of this chapter.
90. Frederick M. Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, edited by Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi, 1983): 53–66.
91. Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory," 54–58 as all the quotations given in this paragraph.
92. Some of the figures were concomitantly identified in van Kooij, "Gods and Attendants in the Relief of Viṣṇu Anantaśayin at Deograh," *South Asian Archaeology 1983* (Naples, 1985): 694–99.

93. The literature is extensive; as an introduction, I would refer to Michael Rabe, "Sculpture, 7th–18th Centuries: Tamil Nadu" in *Dictionary of Art* (London, 1996) 15: 506–13.
94. Odette Viennot, *Les divinités fluviales Gaṅgā et Yamunā aux portes des sanctuaires de l'Inde: Essai d'évolution d'un thème décoratif* (Paris, 1964).
95. Viennot, *Les divinités fluviales*, 34.
96. Ibid., 106 "ces déesses étaient liées à la prospérité de la dynastie Gupta, tandis que, dans le Sud, au lieu de cette étroite association entre elles et la dynastie régnante, les inscriptions nous apprennent que leurs effigies furent adoptées par les princes dans le but d'affirmer leur hégémoine, plus ou moins passagère d'ailleurs, sur les souverains gangétiques."
97. The insignia are discussed in Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old-Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 12 (1883): 157 and again 248; also D. C. Sircar, "A Note on the Nesarika Grant of Govinda III, Saka 727," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 135–37 and Sircar, *Studies in the Political and Administrative Systems of Ancient and Medieval India* (Delhi, 1974): 44–51. The matter can be approached through the more recent discussion given in Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, 1997): 71–72. Kālidāsa's terminology for royal paraphernalia is taken up in Bhagwat Saran Upadhyaya, *India in Kālidāsa* (Allahabad, 1947): 77–78.
98. Heinrich von Stietencron, *Gaṅgā und Yamunā. Zur symbolischen Bedeutung der Flussgöttinnen an indischen Tempeln* (Wiesbaden, 1972).
99. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 41–52; Basudev Upadhyay, "Prayāga – The Capital of the Guptas," *JBRS* 57 (1971): 11–20; the matter is also taken up in Bakker, *Ayodhyā* (Groningen, 1986): 30.
100. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 130, n. 1, notes that the *praśasti* of Samudragupta evidently follows Manu in its definition of Āryavarta, an observation that is hardly incidental in view of the likely composition of the *Mānavadharma* in the fourth century, see further Section 3.4.
101. The Ahichhatra images, now in the National Museum of India, are shown in Viennot, *Les divinités fluviales*, Plate. 22a and Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Figure 139.
102. *Kumārasambhava* (7: 42): *mūrte ca gaṅgāyamune tadānīṃ sacāmare devam aseviṣātām*, cited in Agrawala, "Gupta Art," *JUPHS* 18 (1945): 108 and mentioned again in his *Gupta Art*, 7–8. Agrawala was the first to draw parallels between Udayagiri and various *Kumārasambhava* passages and further noted *Raghuvaṃśa* (13: 8 and 58) that touches on the confluence and course of the rivers and also on Viṣṇu saving the earth from cosmic convulsion.
103. For the royal banners and other emblems see note 97 in this chapter.
104. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 89 (line 3): *kālindīnarmmadayor mmadhyaṃ pālayati* etc. Textual evidence from the *Viṣṇu* and *Vāyu Purāṇa* (*anugaṅgāprayāgaṃ māgadhā guptāś ca bhokṣyanti*) is cited and discussed in Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 50–51; he prefers to understand this as "the territory along the Gaṅgā up to Prayāga will be enjoyed by the people of Magadha and the Guptas." The meaning has been variously interpreted, but the matter is dealt with definitively only in P. L. Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, 1: 115–17. Although P. L. Gupta has made better sense of the Purāṇic passages than other scholars, and shown that they give a sound synopsis of early Gupta history, the fact remains that the various interpretations cannot be reconciled with final authority. The texts, accordingly, cannot be used to draw definitive historical conclusions; indeed, we can only make sense of the texts based on coins and inscriptions. The same methodological conclusion applies to the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, see P. L. Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, 1: 113–63.

105. Adalbert J. Gail, "Viṣṇu als Eber in Mythos und Bild," *Beiträge zur Indienforschung, Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Berlin, 1977): 127–68.
106. Gail, "Viṣṇu als Eber," 166.
107. Heinrich von Stietencron, "Das Kunstwerk als politisches Manifest: Untersuchungen zur Frage nach der Existenz zeitgeschichtlich engagierter Kunst im frühen indischen Mittelalter," *Saeculum* 28.4 (1977): 366–83; Stietencron, "Political Aspects of Indian Religious Art," *Visible Religion* 4–5 (1985–86): 16–36.
108. Ibid., 17.
109. Ibid., 20. Western Indian rulers pioneered the use of Sanskrit for epigraphic purposes which makes this nationalist interpretation impossible to sustain, see Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 66–73.
110. Stietencron, "Political Aspects," 21; for these ideas von Stietencron cites Gail, "Viṣṇu als Eber," but qualifies the link.
111. For a better analysis of the coins see Shailendra Bhandare, "Political Transition in Early Fifth-Century Gujarat: A Numismatic Reappraisal Based on the Silver Issues of the Western Kshatrapas, the Guptas and their Contemporaries," *Numismatic Digest* 29–30 (2005–06): 69–107.
112. Stietencron, "Political Aspects," 20, n. 18, cites the observation of Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, 35, that the kneeling votive figure may be Candragupta as donor but he does not take the issue further. Likewise Shanti Lal Nagar, *Varāha in Indian Art, Culture and Literature* (Delhi, 1993): 7, 81 which, in passing, brings us down to recent writings on the subject. In the brief treatment of Udayagiri, elements of the Nārāyaṇa panel are conflated with that of Varāha, and we find the ideas of V. S. Agrawala once again recycled: Gaṅgā and Yamunā represent the Madhyadeśa and homeland of the Guptas, Mahāvarāha is politically identified with Candragupta and "at one end stands" [sic!] a votive figure, which seems to be the emperor himself.
113. Giovanni Verardi, "Osservazioni sulle sculture in argilla e su alcuni ambienti dei complessi templari I e II di Pendźikent," *Annali dell'Instituto Orientale di Napoli* 42 (1982): 247–304.
114. Ibid., 251.
115. Verardi, "The Kuṣāṇa Emperors as Cakravartins: Dynastic Art and Cults in India and Central Asia: History of a Theory, Clarifications and Refutations," *E&W* 33 (1983): 225–94. His paper, "The Kuṣāṇa Emperors as cakravartins and their Legacy to the Guptas,' read at Seminar on Classical Indian Art (Oxford, 1983) has not been published (personal communication).
116. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 159.
117. Ibid., *bhagavato varāhamūrtter jagatparāyaṇasya nārāyaṇasya śilāprāsādaḥ.*
118. Here following Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 279 and checked against the stone inscription in situ.
119. The reconstruction is that of Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 279, n. 6. The stone has entirely flaked away at this point and the restoration *soḍha-* is hypothetical.
120. The letters are damaged and unclear even in Cunningham's hand copy ("14. Udaygiri or Udayagiri," *ASIR* 10 [1874–77]: Plate xix), but examination in situ showed that the reading *deyadharmmaḥ* is secure.
121. For example, Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 244, n. 3.
122. Salomon, "New Inscriptional Evidence for the Aulikaras," *IIJ* 32 (1989): 1–39; for the Pawāyā bricks, see my *Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra* (London, 1996): 118–19.
123. Salomon, "New Inscriptional Evidence," 5 (line 19): *sabhākūpamaṭhārāmān sadmāni ca divaukasām | yo* ['*] *nyāṃś cānyāyavimukho deyadharmmān acīkarat.*

124. See my "The Sānchī Bodhisattva dated Kuṣāṇa year 28," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6 (1999/2000): 269–73. The reading might better be: (line 2): *dhitare madhurikā*[*ye**] [X] (line 3): [X X X X] [*ane**]*na deyadharmaparit*[*yāgena*] etc. The ongoing meaning of *deyadharma* as a Buddha image throughout the Gupta period is shown by the Kaṭrā Buddha dated year 280, Heinrich Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, edited by Klaus L. Janert, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. Folge, Nr. 7 (Göttingen, 1961): 35. A summary of the controversy surrounding the reading of the date is given in J. G. Williams, "A Mathura Gupta Buddha Reconsidered," *Lalit Kalā* 17 (1974): 28–32; however, the suggestion that the year is not referable to the Gupta era is without warrant.
125. The image was probably a Śiva *liṅga* as will be pointed out in Section 2.10.
126. Daud Ali, who first brought the importance of the phrase to my attention, has explored the issue in *Courtly Culture*, 126; see also comments on the meaning in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 279, n. 5.
127. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8, n. 1 and 25.
128. E. J. Rapson, "Notes on Indian Coins and Seals, Part IV. Indian Seals and Clay Impressions," *JRAS* (1901): plate facing p. 98, no. 1. The seal (not among those that made their way to the British Museum as is sometimes said) suggests that while Viṣṇudāsa may have had Vidiśā as his native place, he was sufficiently important to have served the Guptas throughout their dominion.
129. V. Raghavan, *The Mudrārākṣasanāṭakakathā of Mahādeva*, Sarasvati Mahal Series 1, 2nd edition (Tanjore, 1948): 47 and xxxxiii. We return to the *Mudrārākṣasa* later.
130. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 25): *sāddhvasāddhūdayapralayahetupuruṣasyācintyasya*; (line 28): *lokasamayakkriyānuvidhānamātramānuṣasya lokadhāmno devasya*. The theology of the posthumous soul in the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva faiths is explored Section 2.10.
131. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 159 (line 1): *dharaṇyuddharaṇa* (Eran) and Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 24): *bāhuvīryyaprasaradharaṇibandha-* (Allahābād).
132. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 159 (line 1): *trailokyamahāgṛhastambha* (Eran) and Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 23): *anekabhraṣṭarājyotsannarājavaṃśapratiṣṭhānikhilabhuvanavicaraṇaśāntayaśa* (Allahābād).
133. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 26): *dhanadavaruṇendrāntakasamasya*. Why the list is reduced to four gods, against Manu's eight, is explained in Section 3.3.
134. *Raghuvaṃśa* (17: 81): *indrād vṛṣṭhir niyamitagadodrekavṛttir yamo 'bhūd yādonāthaḥ śivajalapathaḥ karmaṇe naucarāṇāṃ | pūrvāpekṣī tadanu vidadhe kośavṛddhiṃ kuberas tasmin daṇḍopanatacaritaṃ bhejire lokapālāḥ*.
135. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 14, n. 4 and 53 *caturudadhisalilāsvāditayaśaso*, "he whose fame was tasted by the waters of the four oceans." The idea gains an indirect textual warrant from *Arthaśāstra* (9: 1), which describes the land of the *cakravartin* as spreading north from the sea to the Himālayas, cited and discussed in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 3: 66–67. The ocean, perhaps rather drab and grey in the imagination of northern people, was a subject of wonder and poetic glorification in Sanksrit literature as in *Mahābhārata* 1: 5: 19 which can be found in J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata, 1. The Book of the Beginning* (Chicago, 1973): 77. This passage has thematic relevance for the present study in that it explicitly mentions Varāha.
136. *Mudrārākṣasa* (7: 19); van Buitenen, *Two Plays from Ancient India* (New York, 1968): 271.
137. Kale, *Mudrārākshasa of Viśākhadatta*, pp. xiii–xv. Accepted also in van Buitenen, *Two Plays*, 38.

138. The history is summarised in my *Temples of Gopakṣetra* (London, 1997): 18–19 and in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
139. See Raghavan, *Mudrārākṣasanāṭakakathā*, 2.
140. The MS was among those acquired by Bendall (1856–1906), see Cecil Bendall, *A Journey of Literary and Archaeological Research in Nepal and Northern India* (Cambridge, 1886), Part 2, p. 42.
141. See Alfred Hillebrandt, *Mudrārākṣasa by Viśākhadatta*, Edited from MSS and Provided with an Index of all Prākrit Words, Indische Forschungen, 4. Heft (Breslau, 1912): iv.
142. For example, in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 62.
143. Opinions on this point are usefully summarised in Thomas R. Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra* (Leiden, 1971): 41.
144. Radhakrishna Choudhary, "A Critical Reappraisal of the Problems of the Hūṇas in India," *JBRS* 57 (1971): 1–20; Kale, *Mudrārākshasa*, p. 15; Aloka Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India* (Delhi, 1991): 138–40.
145. The identification of these peoples is taken up in Kale, *Mudrārākshasa*, 14–15; some additional discussion in Upadhyaya, *India in Kālidāsa*, 55–56. For the Kulūtas see E. J. Rapson, "Notes on Indian Coins and Seals. Part III. The Kulūtas, a People of Northern India," *JRAS* (1900): 529–43.
146. Raghavan, *Mudrārākṣasanāṭakakathā*, 28. The idea of a circle or *maṇḍala* of kings is specifically mentioned in the prologue of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, so an inverted or outer circle of enemies, following the model of the *Arthaśāstra*, gives the play neat structural symmetry.
147. K. H. Dhruva, *Mudrārākshasa or The Signet Ring* (Poona, 1923): vii–xii.
148. For the historical figures, see note 128 in this chapter. Here I follow Konow who took the play's Candragupta to be a Gupta ruler and made Viśākhadatta a younger contemporary of Kālidāsa, see Sten Konow, *Das indische Drama* (Berlin, 1920): 70ff. Exception has been made to this: A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama* (Oxford, 1924): 205, perfunctorily dismissed Konow's assessment; more details are in Keith, "The Date of the Bṛhatkathā and the Mudrārākṣasa," *JRAS* (1909): 145–49. But Keith gives no arguments as such, only his dogmatic assertion that the Prakrit does not look "early." The concepts of "early" and "late" are among Indology's most notorious shibboleths. These are not critical classifications that deliver scientific results, (i.e., ones that are repeatedly verifiable by others), but rather subjective declarations the validity of which rests on the social authority of the speaker. In the case of Keith, of course, that authority was very substantial. This is not the place to assess how the problematic categories of early and late have been used in Indological discourse, but typically *early* is what this or that author likes and what he judges original, creative, and touched by humanism and naturalism, whereas *late* is what this or that author dislikes and what he judges derivative, repetitive, and enthralled to tradition, devotion, and ecstatic supernormal experience. More recently A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, 6 vols. (Delhi, 1972–88) 3: 257 has given Viśākhadatta to the sixth century without substantial discussion; his framing historical summary (ibid., 3: 235) is at once dated, desultory, and unconvincing.
149. The word *tanu* had long been used to describe forms of Prajāpati, Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: A Comparison* (London, 1970): 44–45; we find it also in a Pallava inscription which refers to a stone image (*śailīntanu-*) embodying the Pallava king, see Section 2.10.
150. Tumain inscription in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 278 *kumāraguptas . . . rarakṣa sādhvīm iva dharmmapatnīm vīryyāgrahastair upaguhya bhūmim*. The compound

*agrahasta*, not "arms" as Bhandarkar et al. translates (ibid., 279), is used by Varāhamihira, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (42: 60 and 57: 26) and is explained in Mammaṭabhaṭṭa, *Kāvyaprakāśā*, *ullāsa* 2. The political aspects of the whole description noted in Ashvini Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas* (Delhi, 1989): 193, but other examples of the king being wed to or crowned by Lakṣmī are found at Eran, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335 (lines 6–7): *bhagavadbhaktena vidhātur icchayā svayaṃvarayeva rājalakṣmyādhigatasya* and in Kadamba copper-plates, see Sircar, "Davangere Plates of Ravivarman, Year 34," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 91 (line 12): *yasya mūrdhni svayaṃ lakṣmir hemakumbhodaracyutaiḥ* ||* *rājyābhiṣekam akarod ambhojaśabalair jalaiḥ* ||[11*]. In *Mudrārākṣasa* (2: 7 and 6: 6) Lakṣmī is represented as fickle in her attachments, unable to make a proper assessment of men. See R. D. Karmarkar, *Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākhadatta* (Poona, 1940): 269 and 368 for additional comments. The king's conjugal relationship with the earth is explored with characteritic insight in Derrett, "Bhū-bharaṇa, bhū-pālana, bhū-bhojana," *BSOAS* 22 (1959): 108–23.

151. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 222. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 10–11, briefly discussed the king's marriage to *rājyaśrī* but incorrectly asserted that Skandagupta was the first Gupta to employ the literary motif in his epigraphs; the study of Śrī in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 175–231 remains definite.
152. That the standing female figure holding a lotus behind the Varāha image is probably Lakṣmī is noted in Verardi, "Osservazioni," 251 and before that in Mitra, "Varāha Cave at Udayagiri," 99. The relationship of Viṣṇu with Śrī and Bhūdevī is summarised in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 229–31.
153. *The Nītisāra or the Elements of Polity by Kāmandaki*, edited by Rajendralala Mitra, revised by Sisir Kumar Mitra (Calcutta, 1982) 1: 1. On some of the problems surrounding the word *bhuvana* see Gonda, "Bhuvana," in *Selected Studies*, 6 vols. (Leiden, 1975) 2: 432–47.
154. Key opinions may be noted: Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, 72, took *deva* to mean Viṣṇu. K. P. Jayaswal, "The Book on Political Science," *JBORS* 18 (1932): 37, thought it was the king. Sisir Kumar Mitra, basing himself on the commentary, understood the verse as referring to the king, see his *Nītisāra*, 1. The commentaries have yet to be fully explored but in T. Gaṇapati Sāstrī, ed., *The Nītisāra of Kāmandaka with the Commentary Jayamaṅgala of Śaṅkarārya*, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, no. 14 (Trivandram, 1912): 1–2 Śaṅkarārya quotes the verse: *caturvarṇāśramo loko rājñā daṇḍena pālitaḥ | svadharmakarpābhirato vartate sveṣu vartmasu.*
155. *Nītisāra* (1: 2–6). The verses are translated and discussed in Section 3.2.
156. The identity of Viṣṇugupta as Kauṭilya has been dealt with by R. P. Kangle, *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, 3 parts (Bombay, 1960–65) 3: 105–06. S. N. Mital, *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra Revisted* (New Delhi, 2000): 9–10 gives some discussion of the names based on the commentaries: Cāṇakya according to Yādavaprakāśa, *Vaijayantī*, is so called because he is *caṇakātmajaḥ*, the son of Caṇaka or a person born in Caṇaka's place.
157. Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, 176–86, concluded that the text was compiled from various sources that betray their date by incidental references to places, items of trade, and coins. Trautmann's view is that the compilation cannot predate the mid-second century CE. The date was confirmed by Hartmut Scharfe who concluded that the work dates to the first or second century; Scharfe, *Investigations*, 293. Of course, the style of analysis used by Trautmann and Scharfe provides only the earliest possible date as the sources used by a compiler would have contained details that predate the compilation.

158. Scharfe, *Investigations*, 1–5. For the date of the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, see Claus Vogel, *Indian Lexicography*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 5, fasc. 4 (Wiesbaden, 1979).
159. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 32, n. 1 and 237; another instance Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 12.
160. For the Sānchī capital, see my *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*, Figure 46. J. G. Williams, "A Re-cut Aśokan Capital and the Gupta Attitude towards the Past," *Artibus Asiae* 35 (1973): 225–40, was wrong to say that the Udayagiri capital was a Mauryan original reworked in Gupta times, a point first made by me in "Udayagiri," *Dictionary of Art* (London, 1996) 31: 520–21 and confirmed by the detailed study in Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography*, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, Bd 18 (Mainz, 2006): 233. The abacus looks re-cut because the capital has been rolled about, not to mention pushed down from the top of the hill. The projecting parts have thus been abraded.
161. Bahadur Chand Chhabra, *Catalogue of Gupta Gold Coins of the Bayana Hoard in the National Museum* (Delhi, 1986): xxx, has briefly discussed the epithet *ajita* on coins and how it lends itself to two interpretations. A similar culture of "eponymous signification" has been noted in the Vākāṭaka court, see Bakker, "Memorials, Temples, Gods and Kings" in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honor of J. C. Heesterman*, pp. 7–16. The practice continued among Gupta subordinates and successors, thus one Harirāja, probably a son of Candragupta II, is described as "of Harirāja who equaled Hari in virtue, brilliance, power and name" (*haritulya guṇavikramadhāmanāmno harirājasya*), see Ahi Bhushan Bhattacharya, "Benares Plates of Hari Rāja of Śura Dynasty," *JUPHS* 18 (1945): 167–73. A separate question is whether Kālidāsa based the *digvijaya* of Raghu on the military achievements of Samudragupta and Candragupta; the literature is summarised in Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, pp. 217–19. Goyal was concerned with the date of Kālidāsa and how the *Raghuvaṃśa* might be tied to "the facts" rather than with defining how eponymous signification could be used to constitute a political culture and legitimise Gupta rule. Other texts of Kālidāsa have also been judged political metaphor. For the *Vikramorvaśī* as a work composed on the occasion of Kumāragupta's installation as *yuvarāja*, see R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Classical Age* (Culture and History of the Indian People) (Bombay, 1954) p. 305 citing Mirashi, *Kālidāsa* (Nagpur, 1934): 161; also see C. Kunhan Raja, "The Political Allegory in Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava" in *Bhārata Kaumudī: Studies in Indology in Honour of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji*, 2 vols. (Allahabad, 1945–47) 2: 589–601. How the political culture of religious metaphor was propagated is told by inscriptions, see note 298 in Chapter 2.
162. Text given in full in note 117 in this chapter.
163. Michael Lockwood et al., *Pallava Art* (Madras, 2001): 223, for which reference I am grateful to Charlotte Schmid. The inscriptions are said to have been first reported in Damodara Nambiar, *Tamil Nadu: Archaeological Perspective*, TNSDA Publication No. 143 (Chennai, 1999) to which I have not had access. In addition to the Shore temple, the image in the Ādivarāha cave at Māmallapuram, likely commissioned by Narasiṃhavarman (circa CE 630–66), can also be interpreted as a royal image, see Michael Rabe, "Royal Portraits and Personified Attributes of Kingship at Mamallapuram" in *Journal: Academy of Art and Architecture*, edited by N. N. Swamy (Mysore, 1991) 1: 1–4.
164. Sircar, "Amudalapadu Plates of Vikramāditya I, Year 5," *EI* 32 (1957–58): 175–84. Despite the Vaiṣṇava invocation, the plates record the gift of a village to Sudarśanācārya on the occasion of the king taking Śaiva *dīkṣā*.
165. Albertine Gaur, *Indian Charters on Copper Plates* (London, 1975): 9 showing a seal with a boar, conch, elephant goad, and other devices and inscribed *tribhuvanāṃkuśa*. The

same motifs are found on the gold coins of the eastern Cāḷukyas. Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*, 2 vols. (London, 1998) 1: 109–10.

166. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 200–05; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 2: 42–49. The key phrase is given in line 24: *tenedaṃ bhavanottamaṃ kṣitibhujā viṣṇoḥ kṛte kāritaṃ*.
167. Illustrated and discussed in Asher, *The Art of Eastern India* (Minneapolis, 1980): plate 87.
168. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 24, n. 5 and its use by Kumāragupta, ibid., 40. The title appears on Candragupta's coins of the horseman type, see Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, 123, which bear the legend: *paramabhāgavatamahārājādhirājaśrīcandraguptaḥ*. The title was used by most subsequent Gupta kings, see my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
169. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35. The attendants are both damaged, but the one at the base of the Varāha is in slightly better condition. Around his neck is a large seal on a chain, in all likelihood the minister's seal or that of the Gupta state. The face of the seal is inscribed with letters, but these are eroded and a reading is not possible. I am grateful to Dr. Meera I. Dass for these valuable observations.
170. The figure is identified in Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa* and illustrated in its general setting in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, Plate XLVI. The four figures of Varuṇa are discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.
171. J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), reviewed by van Buitenen, *JAOS* 80 (1960): 252–53. On Varuṇa specifically, Gonda, "Vedic Gods and the Sacrifice" in *Selected Studies*, 6 (2): 204–05. The political and social dimensions of the rites are briefly explored in K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (Calcutta, 1925) 2: 25 with response in U. N. Ghoshal, "The Besprinkling Ceremony of the Rājasūya', *IHQ* 19 (1943): 354–57. K. M. Panikkar, *Origin and Evolution of Kingship in India* (Baroda, 1938) is not available in U.K. libraries and I am unable to comment on it. Most recently, but covering early polity rather than ritual symbolism, see Hermann Kulke, "The Rājasūya: a Paradigm of Early State Formation?" in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honor of J. C. Heesterman*, pp. 188–98.
172. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 85, 118ff, from which the analysis given here draws freely.
173. Cited in Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 86. The pairing of Agni and Soma in the unction fluid are part of a universal taxonomy, see Wujastyk, "Agni and Soma."
174. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 136 and *Mānavaśrautasūtra*, edited by J. M. van Gelder (Delhi, 1961) (9: 1: 4: 1: 6): *namo mātre pṛthivyā iti vārāhī upānahā abhyavarohati*. Also see the succinct summary of Viṣṇu and Bhūdevī in Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 127–28. In characteristic fashion, the ritual repeatedly reinforces the connections: the aspirant king has to take a step in each direction in order to appropriate the world. The directions, four in number but combined to make five – the whole has to be added to the components – are then co-ordinated with other fivefold systems, for example the Vedic metres. The numerical system is neatly explained by Gonda (ibid., 45). Our own account draws on a few examples to illustrate the point; we need not mimic the sources by surveying all the correspondences. My aim is to be illustrative rather than encyclopaedic: *śeṣas tu granthavistarāḥ* (*Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* 6: 34).
175. Gonda, *Prajāpati and the Year*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederland se Akademie van Wetenschappen. Afd. Letter kunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Reel 123 (Amsterdam, 1984): 91.
176. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 7. Other rites performed for a year are reviewed in Gonda, *Prajāpati and the Year*, 29–33. For the year as a basis for the main story in the

*Mahābhārata*, see Georg von Simson, "Year Myth in the Mahābhārata," in *Composing a Tradition: Concepts, Techniques and Relationships. Proceedings of the First Dubrovnick International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, August, 1997*, edited by Mary Brockington and Peter Schreiner (Zagreb, 1999): 49–66.

177. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 1216. For Caitra śudi 1 as the starting point of the Gupta calendar, see note 36 in this chapter.
178. Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, edited by A. A. Ramanathan with three south Indian commentaries (Madras, 1971) (2: 8: 1–3): *mūrdhābhiṣikto rājanyo bāhujaḥ kṣatriyo virāṭ | rājā rāṭpārthivakṣmābhṛnnṛpabhūpamahīkṣitaḥ || 1 rājā tu praṇatāśeṣasāmantaḥ syād adhīśvaraḥ | cakravartī sārvabhaumaḥ nṛpo 'nyo maṇḍaleśvaraḥ || 2 yeneṣṭaṃ rājasūyena maṇḍalasyeśvaraś ca yaḥ | śāsti yaś cājñayā rājñaḥ sa samrāḍ atha rājakam ||* 3. Amarasiṃha flourished in the Gupta period; for a survey of the lexicographers and their dates, see Claus Vogel, *Indian Lexicography*. In the *Nītisāra* (3: 37–38) the ruler, by virtue of disciplined conduct, achieves mastery of the world (*viguṇena jagad vaśībhavet*). This doctrine is articulated on Candragupta's coins: "Having conquered the earth with good conduct, Vikramāditya conquers heaven" (*kṣitim avajitya sucaritair divaṃ jayati vikramādityaḥ*). See Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, 34–35. As just noted, the unction fluid, combining Agni and Soma, invests the king with a new body. The inverse appears in medicine and the martial arts where Agni and Soma are used to classify the body's vulnerable points: if the essence of Agni and Soma leave the body via these points, the patient or combatant dies. Wujastyk, "Agni and Soma," 356–57.
179. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 (line 5): *kṛtsnapṛthivījayārthena rājñaiveha sahāgataḥ*. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India*, 2nd edition (Madras, 1948): 81–92 proves a general framework.
180. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 83.
181. The *cakravartin* ideal is detailed in Sircar, *Studies in the Ancient and Medieval Geography of India* (Delhi, 1971): 4–6, but without reference to Amarasiṃha; diverse materials are collected in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 3: 63ff and 2: 1214ff to which the account in *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2: 26: 138–52) may be added. In Gupta inscriptions, the term is first used in the Supia pillar inscription to describe Skandagupta, see Sircar, "Two Inscriptions of Gupta Age," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 308 and Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 317–18 (lines 4–5): *cakkra[vartti]tulyo* etc.
182. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 183, n.4. In citing *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1: 13: 46) Fleet has again presaged the ideas proposed in this essay.
183. This corresponded to 07 November in CE 2000, Śrī Narendra Svarūp Bhaṭnāgar, *Rucikā kāladarśak paṃcāṃga* (Delhi, 2000). I checked the observation again in 2006, when the *utthānaikādaśī* or *devuṭhni* fell on 01 November.
184. The Vedic correspondences are surveyed in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 77–76; Gonda, "Vedic Gods and the Sacrifice," in *Selected Studies* (Leiden, 1995) 6 (2): 206–08; and Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 5. An indispensible survey of the problem as a whole is Gérard Colas, "Jalons pour une histoire des conceptions indiennes de *yajña*" in *Rites hindous: transferts et transformations*, edited by Gérard Colas and Giles Tarabout (Paris, 2006): 343–87. Viṣṇu's identity with sacrifice also covered in Soifer, *Myths of Narasimha and Vāmana*, 30–32. Colas, "The Competing Hermeneutics of Image Worship in Hinduism," in *Images in Asian Religions: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Toronto, 2004): 150–51 rightly notes that the hard distinction between sacrifice and *pūjā* is partly an artefact of occidental scholarship: a commingling of Vedic rites with the worship of the gods and a "deep theicization of the Vedic sacrifice" began from the first century CE.

185. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa*, 333–34 provides a detailed commentary on the terminology. Similar material appears in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and in *Viṣṇusmṛti* (1: 5–9).
186. *Bhagavad Gītā* (8: 4): *adhiyajño 'ham evātra dehe.* The identification of Viṣṇu and the sacrifice in Purāṇic religion is part of the larger theoretical problem connected to the ways in which Vedism found a place in theism. The issue is explored from the textual point of view by Brian K. Smith in "The Destiny of Vedism," his closing chapter in *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 1989). More specifically, see Frederick M. Smith, *The Vedic Sacrifice in Transition: A Translation and Study of the Trikāṇḍamaṇḍana of Bhāskara Miśra* (Poona, 1987). In relation to Vaiṣṇavism, see Gonda, "Vedic Cosmogony and Viṣṇuite Bhakti," in *Selected Studies*, 6 (1): 377–403; relevant observations are made in Gérard Colas, "The Reworking of 'Vedic' Paradigms in Medieval Liturgies," in *Les ressources de l'histoire : tradition, narration et nation en Asie du Sud*, edited by Jackie Assayag (Paris, 1999): 41–50; in relation to Śaivism, see Richard Davis, "Cremation and Liberation: The Revision of a Hindu Ritual," *History of Religions* 28 (1988): 37–53. In the present book, I have followed a slightly different route, attempting to chart Vedism's "destiny" on the ground in specific places and at specific times using texts, inscriptions, and the archaeological record.
187. E. Hultzsch, "Pardi Plates of Dahrasena; the Year 207," *EI* 10 (1909–10): 51–54; V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 4 (Ootacamund, 1955) 1: 24 (hereinafter Mirashi, CII 4): *bhagavatpādakarmmakaro* [*]*śvamedhāharttā śrīmahārāja dahrasenaḥ*. Dahrasena and his son Vyāghrasena also styled themselves *paramavaiṣṇava* on their coins (Hultzsch, "Pardi Plates," 53). Similarly, the stone inscription of king Bhūtivarman of the Bhauma-Nāraka dynasty of Prāgjyotiṣa records him to be *paramadaivata* and *mahārājāśvamedhayājinaḥ*; the correct reading is given by Sircar in *EI* 30 (1953–54): 62–67. On the title *paramadaivata*, see note 198 in this chapter.
188. Coins of Kumāragupta carry a legend which can be reconstructed as: *śryaśvamedhamahendraḥ*, "Lord of the glorious *aśvamedha*," Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 295 (number 21). Other coins carry *aśvamedhaparākramaḥ*, "He who is powerful through the *aśvamedha*," see further discussion in Section 3.3.
189. Dirks, *Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom.*
190. For Samudragupta's reinstatement of kings, noted earlier, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 23): *anekabhraṣṭarājyotsannarājavaṃśapratiṣṭhānikhilabhuvanavicaraṇaśāntayaśaḥ*. The restoration ritual is given in the *Kauśikasūtra*, for which B. R. Modak, *The Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda: A Study with Special Reference to the Pariśiṣṭas* (Delhi, 1993): 236 and the practice is also commended in *Viṣṇusmṛti* (3: 47–48), a work of the circa sixth century as noted in Section 2.12.
191. K. V. Ramesh and S. P. Tiwari, *A Copper-Plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh* (New Delhi, 1990): 1–2, here with the corrections of the editors included. We say "missing text" because the statements given in this plate predate surviving literary works with similar material. The plates are kept in the Central Museum, Indore.
192. The Nandaka sword belongs to Kṛṣṇa. There are eight arms but only seven weapons listed in the text: the contradiction is explained in *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (58: 33) in which one hand displays a gesture of reassurance: *khaḍgagadāśarapāṇir dakṣiṇataḥ śāntidaś caturthakaraḥ | vāmakareṣu ca kārmukakheṭakacakrāṇi śaṅkhaś ca*. The bees, mentioned in the prevous line, may represent devotees and, by extension, political subordinates: *pādapadmopajīvin*, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 98, n. 4. But as kindly pointed out to me by Dr. Whitney Cox, *aravindaṣaṭpada* in the singular could also be understood as Brahmā and his singing the Vedas.

193. In this list of demons, Bujaga is Kālīya, Daśavadana is Rāvaṇa, Cānūra was a wrestler in the service of Kaṃsa, and Ariṣṭa was a demon who took the form of a bull that was killed by Kṛṣṇa. Varaturaga is identifed by the editors of the inscription as Keśin; he is said to be an incarnation of Hayagrīva who died in the Tārakāmaya war as are some of the others mentioned here, see Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 144. The *Harivaṃśa* seems to be the source of the demons listed in this inscription.
194. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 5): *surendrāṇāṃ mātrābhyo nirmito nṛpaḥ*. Under Kumāragupta the analogy to the divine, rather than a direct equivalence, is made explicit in coins bearing the legend *sākṣād iva narasiṃho siṃhamahendro jayaty aniśam*, "the lion-king who resembles Narasiṃha is ever victorious," Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, 77. Bakker, "Throne and Temple: Political Power and Religious Prestige in Vidarbha," in *The Sacred Centre as a Focus of Political Interest* (Groningen, 1992): 89, n. 13, rightly notes that the use of *iva* is significant in that it declares the king to be like god, not god per se. Bakker ("Throne and Temple," 87–88) also discusses the qualities of virtue, compassion, and the like in which the Vākāṭaka kings prided themselves according to their epigraphic records. Bakker is less inclined to accept transformative rituals as central to the theory of fifth-century kingship, as I do here, and the tensions between these interpretations needs to be addressed at a future stage.
195. J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Bhagavad Gītā in the Mahābhārata* (Chicago, 1981) (8: 5–10). The allusions to the *BhG* in Kālidāsa, showing thus the authority of the text in Kālidāsa's time, were noted long ago by K. T. Telang, SBE, 8: 29–30. More recently the *BhG* has been assigned to the first century CE, see Brockington, *Sanskrit Epics*, 147, and we find the *BhG* referred to in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*, a portion of the epic generally assigned to the fourth or fifth century, see Angelika Malinar, "Nārāyaṇa und Kṛṣṇa: Aspekte der Gotteslehre des Nārāyaṇīya im Vergleich zur Bhagavad Gītā," in *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien* (Wiesbaden, 1997): 285–91.
196. The text has already drawn our attention for different reasons and is given in note 130. Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 278–79 has not understood the posthumous nature of the record and the posthumous theology, so he cannot accept what the inscription actually says. See Section 2.10 where the status of dead soul is explored.
197. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 6 (line 6); Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 215, n. 5.
198. Sircar, "The Royal Epithet Paramadaivata," in *Political and Administrative Systems*, 265–70 and contra Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 155–56. In slightly later times, as Sircar notes, *paramadaivata* came to be applied, sometimes but not exclusively, to kings who had passed away. The eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā* again helps clarify the distinction; *BhG* 8: 4 says: *adhibhūtaṃ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidaivatam*. The literature on the divine king, so-called, is well developed: E. W. Hopkins, "The Divinity of Kings," *JAOS* 51 (1931): 309–16; Jan Gonda, "The Sacred Character of Ancient Indian Kingship," in *Selected Studies*, 4: 475–83, 122–55; J. D. M. Derrett, "Rājadharma," *Journal of Asian Studies* 35 (1976): 597–609; C. J. Fuller, "Royal Divinity and Human Kingship in the Festivals of a South Indian Temple," *South Asian Social Scientist* 1 (1985): 3–43. Burton Stein, "Mahānavamī: Medieval and Modern Kingly Ritual in South India," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, pp. 67–90.
199. Hans T. Bakker, "Memorials, Temples, Gods and Kings," in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honor of J. C. Heesterman*, Memoirs of the Kern Institute, no.5, edited by A. W. Van den Hock, D. H. A. Kolff, and M. S. Oort (Leiden, 1992): 14. Bakker flags up his differences with Burton Stein on the nature of the "divine king" given in Stein, "Mahānavamī," 89–90. The matter is explored in greater detail

in Bakker, "Throne and Temple," 81–100. Our views also contra Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 279, who insists that "the king's transcendent god was never the god of a political *ethnie*." The second of Pollock axioms (ibid., 279) is also incorrect, see note 355 in Chapter 2.

200. *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, ed. Grünendahl,. 126–27.
201. Illustrated in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Figure 41. More recently some stones have been turned at the instigation of Dr. Meera I. Dass and further door-jamb fragments revealed.
202. D. R. Bhandarkar, *Archaeological Survey of India Report, Western Circle* (1915): 65–66. For the preconceptions and misguided assumptions that informed this excavation, see Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," 31.
203. Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Figures 18–19; the find-spot is recorded in *Indian Archaeology – A Review* (1963–64): 89. Discovery of the Udayagiri sculptures in the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior is due to the research of Dr. Meera I. Dass. That there can be multiple centres of ritual attention in the temple is explained in Giles Tarabout, "Theology as History," in *Images in Asian Religions*, 63.
204. Willis, "Inscriptions from Udayagiri," lines 2–3: *kanha praṇamati vīṣṇupādau nityaṃ*.
205. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 89 (lines 1–2); for an improved edition, Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, 266. On the three strides generally, see the splendid overview in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 55–72.
206. Cunningham, "14. Udaygiri or Udayagiri," 36 briefly mentions the *tīrtha* "where two small hollows in the rock are believed to be the charan, or foot prints of Vishnu." There are sculptures of Viṣṇu's feet at the place; the oldest date to the Paramāra period.
207. See Hans T. Bakker, "The Footprints of the Lord," in *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India, Studies in Honour of Charlotte Vaudeville*, edited by Diana L. Eck and Françoise Mellison (Groningen and Paris, 1991): 20–37.
208. The Tumain inscription of Kumāragupta II mentions Vaṭodaka, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 298 (line 4). The local rulers are named in an inscription in a cave at Badoh itself, Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, *Annual Report (VS 1982)*: 12. For some of the standing temples, see *EITA: North India, Foundations of North Indian Style* (Delhi, 1988): 129–31; for the sculpture, see C. Berkson, "Some New Finds at Ramgarh Hill, Vidisha District," *Artibus Asiae* 40 (1978): 215–32. There are many temples in the area, Anne Casile, "The Archaeological Remains of Rāmgarh Hill: A Report," in *Temple in South Asia*, edited by Adam Hardy (London, 2007): 29–48.
209. M. R. Kale, *The Meghadūta of Kālidāsa with the commentary (Sanjīvini) of Mallinātha* (Bombay, 1916): 21.
210. Otto von Böthlingk and Rudolf Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, 7 vols. (St. Petersberg, 1855–75): s.v. *nīcais*. G. C. Tripathi, *Der Ursprung und die Entwicklung der Vāmana-Legende in der indischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1968); more recently the theories of Vāmana's dwarfishness are outlined in Soifer, *Myths of Narasimha and Vāmana*, 37–38; descriptions of the dwarf in Purāṇic sources (ibid., 122–25).
211. R. Balasubramaniam, "Identity of Chandra and Vishnupadagiri of the Delhi Iron Pillar Inscription: Numismatic, Archaeological and Literary Evidence," *Bulletin of Metals Museum* 32 (2000): 42–64; R. Balasubramaniam and Meera I. Dass, "Estimation of the Original Erection Site of the Delhi Iron Pillar at Udayagiri," *IJHS* 39.1 (2004): 51–74; Dass, "On the Astronomical Signficance of the Delhi Iron Pillar," *Current Science* 86 (2004): 1135–42; R. Balasubrahmaniam, Meera I. Dass, and Ellen M. Raven, "The Original Image atop the Delhi Iron Pillar," *IJHS* 39.2 (2004): 177–203.

212. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 285 (line 6): *viṣṇupade girau bhagavato viṣṇudhvajaḥ sthāpitaḥ*. Further discussion in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 65–66. As kindly pointed out to me by Hans Bakker, the word *iha* (i.e., "here"), is the only in situ epigraphic reference we have to Udayagiri, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35. In my "Inscriptions from Udayagiri," 49, I wrote that the name Udayagiri may date to the time of the Paramāra ruler Udayāditya, but it is possible that the name is old and that he took his name from the hill. In that article, I gave Udayāditya's dates as circa 1070–93. Since writing that I have found H. V. Trivedi, "Epigraphic Notes," *JBRS* 57 (1971): 80–86 where the death of the king is argued to have taken place in August 1094. The iron pillar – to complete the story – appears to have been taken to Delhi as a trophy by Iltutmish after he destroyed the temple of Bhāillasvāmin at Vidiśā in the thirteenth century, a point taken up in Section 2.8. The Sultanate predilection for shifting pillars is highlighted by the later removal of the Aśokan pillar from Meerut to Delhi in the time of the Tughluqs.
213. *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, ed. Grünendahl, 40–41 (*adhyāya* 19–20, immediately following the worship of Viṣṇupada). Gupte, *Hindu Holidays*, 28–29, mentions certain stories and *vrata*-s connected with the four-month period of Viṣṇu's sleep that were popular at the beginning of the twentieth century; the fast undertaken by the mythical king Māndhāta (thus a royal *vrata*) and the *pūjā* to the earth provide some link to the sequence in the *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*.
214. The texts are given in Wujastyk, "Agni and Soma," 353–54.
215. On the terminology, see André Couture, "From Viṣṇu's Deeds to Viṣṇu's Play, Observations on the Word Avatāra as a Designation for the Manifestations of Viṣṇu," *JIP* 29 (2001): 313–26. It is, of course, difficult to pinpoint the exact doctrinal orientation of the Guptas; the problem is taken up in Chapter 3 where we examine the Gupta priesthood.
216. Longhurst suggested a similar manipulation of water for ritual purposes at Māmallapuram, as kindly pointed out to me by Dr. Archana Verma. See A. H. Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture*, part II, MASI, no. 33 (Calcutta, 1928): 40–1. Other analogies between Māmallapuram and Udayagiri have already been noted.
217. J. A. B. van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (III)," *JAOS* 77 (1957): 91.

## Chapter 2. The Establishment of the Gods

1. Text given in C. R. Krishnamacharlu, "The Nala Inscription at Podagadh; 12th year," *EI* 21 (1931–32): 155, here with minor corrections. Poḍāgarh = Poriguda of Survey of India maps, see Figure 1. The inscription dates to the fifth century.
2. See Section 1.6.
3. The semantics and ritual symbolism are explored in Malamoud, "Paths of the Knife," 169–80.
4. On the epigraphic use of *iha*, meaning the actual place where the inscription was written, see note 290 in this chapter.
5. V. Krishnamacharya, *Viṣṇusmṛti with the Commentary Keśavavaijayantī*, 2 vols. Adyar Library Series, vol. 93 (Madras, 1964) 1: 47, here as translated by Julius Jolly in SBE, vol. 7: p. 8.
6. Krishnakumari J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra: Being a Study of the Maitrakas of Valabhi V to VIII Centuries A. D.* (Bombay, 1952): 21, for the use of Śrī Bhaṭārka's name by his descendents. An example of one such seal is in the British Museum, accession number 1968. 2–14. 1. For the Maitrakas, we now have Marlene Njammasch, *Bauern, Buddhisten und Brahmanen: Das frühe Mittelalter in Gujarat* (Wiesbaden, 2001), reviewed O. v. Hinüber, *IIJ* 47 (2004): 308–20.

7. For Pallava examples, see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 457–66; for Śālaṅkāyana examples, see Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 5 (1876): 175–77; for a Vākāṭaka example, see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 43–35; the Valkhā examples are published in Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*. The late fourth-century Kalāchalā grant of Īśvararāta, for which Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, 107, is coeval with the Valkhā grants and thus less exceptional than it once seemed.
8. For an account of these rubbings, see Walter Elliot, "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 6 (1877): 226–28. The record illustrated here is edited in Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 5 (1876): 175–77.
9. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, 107. The origin of the practice may yet be Andhra as the oldest example so far is from there: Falk, "The Pātaganḍigūḍem Copper-plate Grant of the Ikṣvāku King Ehavala Cāntamūla," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6 (1999/2000): 275–83. However, we are addressing the wide acceptance of plates, not their absolute beginning.
10. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 270–74; forged copper-plates are covered in Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, 165–68.
11. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Chapter 5; Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, 113–15. Marc Aurel Stein, "Formal Elements in Indian Inscriptions," *IHQ* 9 (1933): 215–26.
12. See Section 1.11.
13. F. Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats* (Delhi, 1999): 6–7.
14. These were not, of course, the only terms. The words and their problematic meanings are discussed in S. K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period (cir. A.D. 300–550)* (Calcutta, 1957): 23–5 with subsequent opinion summarised in Saroj Dutta, *Land System in Northern India* (Delhi, 1995).
15. As noted in Sircar, "Epigraphic Notes, 9. Creation of Rent-free Holdings," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 50, n. 4.
16. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 10: 75–6 with near identical wording in 1: 88. English translation in G. Bühler, SBE, vol. 25: 419, 470; more recently Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 211 and 225. The matter of earning a living and property is explored in Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India* (London, 1968, reprinted ed. Delhi, 1999): 122–27 on which the discussion here is partly based.
17. In *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 3: 150–68, there is a long list of unacceptable activities, which, if done by brāhmaṇas, were grounds for their being shunned and not fed at a *śraddha*. The obvious implication is that brāhmaṇas were doing these things to earn a living, although the inclusion of professional dancing and animal training suggests a degree of hyperbole.
18. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 247 (lines 39–41); Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 29.
19. Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 7–8 and 35–7: *vyāsagītaś cātra śloko bhavati | svadattām paradattāṃ vā yo hareta vasundharāṃ | gavāṃ śatasahasrasya hantur harati duṣkṛtam*, "And on this point there is a verse sung by Vyāsa: Whosoever confiscates land that has been given, whether by himself or another, he incurs the guilt of the slayer of a hundred thousand cows!"
20. E. Hultzsch, "Pardi Plates of Dahrasena," 51–54. Mirashi, CII 4 (1955) 1: 24. The date of these plates, if referred to the Kalacuri Cedi era of CE 249, corresponds to 4 April 456 current or 23 April 457 expired. It appears that this family claimed political authority when the imperial formation of the Guptas faltered in the time of Ghaṭotkacagupta circa CE 448–55 and Pravarasena II circa CE 419?-55. The chronology is taken up in my "Later Gupta History," *JRAS* 15 (2005): 131–50.
21. Read: *ṣaṣṭi-*°
22. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 290 and Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 294 (lines 11–13). The Dhanāidaha plates are dated 113 (CE 432–33) and so predate the Dāmodarpur

plates by just over a decade, but much of the text is missing, Sircar, ibid., 1: 287–89. Yaroslav Vassilkov argues that tales from the *Mahābhārata* circulated long before the text was written down, but in fact the evidence he cites proves only that certain tales found their way into an epic assembled from the circa third century CE, the date of one of the inscriptions he publishes. Vassilkov, "Indian Practice of Pilgrimage and the Growth of the Mahābhārata in the Light of New Epigraphical Sources," in *Stages and Transitions: Temporal and Historical Frameworks in Epic and Puranic Literature*, edited by Mary Brockington (Zagreb, 2002): 133–58.

23. Read: *–sambaddhāv imau.*
24. Read: *mahīmatāṃ.*
25. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 332–34; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 337. We have changed Bhandarkar's [*sa viṣṭhā*]yāṃ kṛmir* based on one of Uccakalpa plates, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (line 25) as well as a plate of Budhagupta, for which Balchandra Jain, "Shankarpur Plate of Budhagupta and Harivarman," *JESI* 4 (1977): 64 (line 7) and finally *Mahābhārata, Āśvamedhika Parvan*, edited by R. D. Karmarkar (Poona, 1960): Appendix no. 4 (v. 2382): *kṛmir bhūtvā śvaviṣṭhāyāṃ pitṛbhiḥ saha majjati.*
26. The reading *maharśśibhiḥ* is certain. The ascription of the verses to Vyāsa is attested in the Deccan by copper-plates from the early fifth century, but we cannot say on this evidence that the canonical tradition has its origin in the Deccan: the Kalaikuri copper-plate, from Bangladesh and dated 120 (CE 439–40), is actually the first to cite both Vyāsa and the *Mahābhārata* by name; see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 352–55 (lines 29–30): *uktañ ca mahabhārate bhagavatā vyāsena.* All we can conclude from the epigraphic evidence is that the canonical formation of the *Mahābhārata* was taking place in the second half of the fifth century, with increasingly correct Sanskrit being evident from the early sixth century, see note 41 in this chapter. Similar conclusions are reached by a slightly different path in Georg Bühler and J. Kirste, *Contributions to the History of the Mahābhārata*, Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Classe, Bd. 127 (Vienna, 1892).
27. A list of the passages in the Parivrājaka and Uccakalpa plates is given in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 98, n. 6. To this should be added the plate discovered after Fleet and published in Hira Lal, "Betul Plates of Samkshobha; the Gupta year 199," *EI* 8 (1905–06): 284–87. The political place and history of these rulers is taken up in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50. Also add the plates of a subordinate of Kumāragupta dated Gupta year 120, see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 352–55. This has one exceptional verse: *kṛśāya kṛśa[vṛttāya] vṛttikṣīṇāya sīdate [bhūmiṃ] vṛttikarin dattvā [sukhī] bhavati kāmadaḥ.* This has not entered the critical edition, and it does not appear, as far as I know, in other inscriptions.
28. *Mahābhārata, Āśvamedhika Parvan*, Appendix no. 4, pp. 388–99 (vv. 1109–1126). The only perfect or near perfect correspondences between the appendix and the early inscriptions which I have traced so far are: *svadattāṃ paradattāṃ vā yo hareta vasuṃdharām* (1109); *yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā phalam* (1126); *kṛmir bhūtvā śvaviṣṭhāyāṃ pitṛbhiḥ saha majjati* (2382). These were found using the Electronic Mahābhārata made available through the efforts of Dr. John Smith. I have also benefited from discussions with Dr. T. Proferes on these points.
29. Ibid., 471.
30. Epigraphic citations give some indication of our text's use in specific courts. I have not made a comprehensive study, but a late fifth- or early sixth-century plate from Ganjam District in Orissa carries one of the verses and mentions Yudhiṣṭhira,

R. K. Ghoshal, "The Stray Plate from Tirlingi: [Gaṅga?] Year 28," *IHQ* 19 (1943): 234–36; the same verse without epic figures in a Nala plate from Orissa, G. Ramdas, "Kesaribeḍā Copper-Plates of Mahārāja Arthhapali Bhaṭṭaraka of the Nala Family," *JBRS* 34 (1948): 33–42. Further south, two verses appear in the early Pallava plates of Cārudevī, see Albertine Gaur, *Indian Charters on Copper Plates* (London, 1975), 1–2; a version is also employed on sixth-century Kadamba plates, D.C. Sircar, "Davangere Plates of Ravivarman, Year 34," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 91–92 (lines 23–25). The date of the migration southward can be fixed with certainty to the early part of the fourth century: the plates of Ikṣvāku king Ehavala Cāntamūla (circa C.E. 265–300) end with an imprecation but the language is Prakrit and the wording unlike the epic passages, see Falk, "The Pātaganḍigūḍem Copper-plate Grant of the Ikṣvāka King Ehavala Cāntamūla," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6(1999/2000), 275–83. The Cārudevī plates, just cited, are in Prakrit but the epic imprecation is in Sanskrit. This indicates that brāhmaṇas bearing the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* arrived in the southern courts during the first half of the fourth century. The Valkhā plates of the second half of the fourth century lack imprecatory passages, and the editors of those records suggested this was because the land was being brought under the brāhmaṇical system for the first time and so the question of misappropriation of gift-lands had yet to arise, see Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, xii. But this cannot be right: already in the Valkhā grants there is evidence of forged documents, ibid., xviii; besides and more significantly, the Valkhā rulers appear to have had independent ideas, re-assigning land formerly granted to temple service, ibid., 28 (lines 4–5): *garjjanānakagrāme pūrvvabrahmadeyakṣetram . . . balicarugandha* etc. *upayojyam*, also ibid., 10–11 (lines 3–4) and again ibid., 13 (line 3).

31. M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1927–33) 1: 463; Brockington, *Sanskrit Epics*, 237; Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and Early Reading Communities," in *Between the Empires: Society in India in 300 BCE to 400 CE*, edited by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford, 2006):250, n. 74.
32. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (line 19). Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, 1: 464, without citing Fleet, refers to land grants in which "sections of Book XIII [sic] are quoted as sacred texts; and in one inscription of this kind the *Mahābhārata* is already called the collection of a hundred thousand verses." Since Winternitz's time, an earlier inscription mentioning the *Mahābhārata* by name has been found; see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 355 (line 29). The epigraphic evidence is taken up again in Brockington, *Sanskrit Epics*, 131, and James L. Fitzgerald, "Negotiating the Shape of 'Scripture': New Perspectives on the Development and Growth of the Mahābhārata between the Empires," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, edited by Patrick Olivelle (Oxford, 2006): 257–86. See further discussion later in Section 3.3.
33. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (lines 27–29) *likhitaṃ . . . sāndhiviggrahikanāthena.*
34. Read: *mahīmatāṃ*. The frequent use of *v* for *m* in the charters is notable.
35. Read: *pūyante.*
36. Read: *tu.*
37. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 114–15. Some account of the inscriptions mentioning this goddess and the other deities discussed here is given in Njammasch, *Bauern, Buddhisten und Brahmanen*, 321–23.
38. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 114 (lines 11–14) *mahārājaśrīsaṃkṣobheṇa mātāpitror ātmanaś ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye choḍugomivijñāptyā tam eva ca svargasopānapaṃktiṃ āropayatā bhagavatyāḥ piṣṭapuryāḥ kāritakadevakule balicarusattropayogārthaṃ khaṇḍasphuṭitasaṃskārārthañ ca . . . opāṇigrāmasyārddhaṃ . . . tāmraśāsanenātisṛṣṭaṃ.*

39. Ibid., 130–31. Śarvanātha ruled circa CE 511–34 but because this charter is undated, it is difficult to say if it preceded or followed the grant just mentioned.
40. Ibid.,131 (lines 11–13) *bhagavatyāḥ piṣṭhapurikādevyāḥ khaṇḍaphuṭṭa* [= Skt *sphuṭita*] *pratisaṃskārakāraṇāya balicarusattrapravarttanāya cātisṛṣṭaḥ*.
41. Ibid.,137 (lines 11–21): *bhagavatyāḥ piṣṭhapurikādevyāḥ pūjānimittaṃ khaṇḍasphuṭitapratisaṃskāraṇāya ca*. In this, the last of the charters connected with this goddess, Prakrit *phuṭṭa*, which appears in earlier charters from many parts of north India (see note 40 for an example), has been superseded by Sanskrit *sphuṭita*. This is also one of the few inscriptions that actually names the *Mahābhārata* (as already noted, the earliest instance is the Kalaikuri inscription of Gupta year 120, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 352–55) and the only one that describes the text as the *śatasāhasrī saṃhitā*. This seems to indicate that a conscious process of codification and Sanskritisation took place in the first half of the sixth century. The earliest instance of *sphuṭita* replacing *phuṭṭa* I have traced so far is in a plate of Toramāṇa dated anno 3, thus early sixth century, see R. N. Mehta and A. M. Thakur, *M. S. University Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa* (Baroda, 1978): 14–15 (line 3). The photograph of the plate ibid., Figure 1, shows *sphuṭita* is the correct reading. Toramāṇa's tenure in northern Gujarāt was probably short, and only the plate bearing his name should be considered Hūṇa; see Salomon, "New Inscriptional Evidence for the Aulikaras," *IIJ* 32 (1989): 29.
42. Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia* (Delhi, 1993): 4–7.
43. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 113, n. 2; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 213. We need not take up the debated issue of the king who ruled there, for which Fleet, ibid., 7, n. 2, and Bhandarkar et al., ibid., 15–16. A gold coin of Samudragupta found at Śaṅkaram, a site located west of Anakapalli, District Vizagapatam, Andhra Pradesh, may indicate the early Gupta presence in northern Andhra if it is not a subsequent votive deposit. A. Rea, "A Buddhist Monastery on the Śaṅkaram Hills, Vizagaptam District," *ASIR* (1907–08): 474. This is the only Samudragupta gold coin found so far in Andhra.
44. The relevant plates, all grants to brāhmaṇas and none of which refer to the goddess under discussion here, are discussed in P. V. P. Sastry, "Piṭhapuram: A Historical Town in Andhradeśa," *Itithāsa: Journal of the Andhra Pradesh Archives* 5.1 (1977): 83–93. The later importance of Piṣṭapura is confirmed by its mention in the Aihole temple inscription of Pulakeśin II; see F. Kielhorn, "Aihole Inscription of Pulakesin II; Saka-Samvat 556," *EI* 6 (1900–01): 6 (line 13) *piṣṭaṃ piṣṭapuraṃ yena jātaṃ durggam adurggamañ citraṃ yasya kaler vṛttam jātaṃ durggamadurggamam*; to quote Kielhorn's translation: "hard pressed by him, Piṣṭapura became a fortress not difficult of access; wonderful (to relate) the ways of the Kali age were quite inaccessible to him." Also in Fleet "Sanskrit and Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 8 (1879): 242 (line 13). Stone inscriptions at the place belong only to the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, Robert Sewell, *Lists of Antiquarian Remains in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1882): 24.
45. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 113, n. 2.
46. P. V. P. Sastry, "Piṭhapuram" and personal communication with Dr. Sūrya Nārāyaṇa, Andhra University, Vishakhapatam, to whom many thanks are due. I am indebted to Dr. Amiteshwar Jha, Nasik, for providing me with a copy of Sastry's article.
47. Catherine Clementine-Ojha, *Le trident sur le palais* (Paris, 1999): 31–33; for the religious culture of the period, Monika Thiel-Horstmann, *In Favour of Govindadevjī: Historical Documents Relating to a Deity of Vrindaban and Eastern Rājasthān* (New Delhi, 1999). Other cases could be used: Alexander Henn, *Wachheit der Wesen: Politik, Ritual und Kunst der Akkulturation in Goa* (Hamburg, 2002).

48. C. E. Luard, *Eastern States (Bundelkhand) Gazetteer*, The Central Indian State Gazetteer Series (Lucknow, 1907) VI-A. – Text, p. 18. Allison Busch, "Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Keśavdās," *South Asian Research* 25 (2005): 31–54; the poet is generally associated with Indrajit and Vīrsingh rather than Madhukar Shāh.
49. E. Hultzsch, "Pithapuram Inscription of Mallideva and Manma-Satya II; Saka-Samvat 1117," *EI* 4 (1896–97): 83–97. Tamil lacks the distinction between voiceless and voiced stops and between aspirates and unaspirates so where in Sanskrit there is "ca, cha, ja, jha" in Tamil there is only "ca." The northern scribe named Īśvaradāsa who wrote the name on the plate (Fleet, CII 3 [1888]: 114 [line 24]) evidently heard "cha." I reject completely the suggestion that Choḍugomika was a "tribal priest," Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism* (Delhi, 1981): 112.
50. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 7.
51. Ibid., 114 (line 1). For comments on the invocation *oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*, see Gonda, "The Indian Mantra," in *Selected Studies* 4: 283. Fleet (CII 3: 113, n. 3, and p. 130) was the first to note that Piṣṭapurikā was probably a form of Lakṣmī. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 218, noted that Piṣṭapurikā seems to be connected with Lakṣmī as Annapūrṇā, "the goddess possessed of plenty of food," because *piṣṭapūra* is a sort of cake made from corn. The connection, however, cannot be sustained as the plates clearly and consistently read *piṣṭapurī/-ikā* (with a short "u"). Borrowing from Gonda, Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, 112–13 suggests that Piṣṭapurikā was a conflation of a mother-goddess of Piṣṭapura, Śrī Lakṣmī and Durgā as Annapūrṇā but the discussion is speculative and unconvincing; uncompelling also is Chitralekha Gupta, *The Brahmanas of India: A Study Based on Inscriptions* (Delhi, 1983): 139, who wants Choḍugomika to be non-brāhmaṇa by caste and Piṣṭapurika a goddess who was "incorporated into the fold of brāhmaṇical deities" through "Sanskritzation."
52. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122 (line 9): *bhagavatpādebhyaḥ devāgrāhāro* ['*]*tisṛṣṭaḥ*.
53. Personal communication with Dr. Naval Krishna.
54. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 136. He gives the location as Lat 23° 46′ N, 81° 11′ E.
55. A. K. Singh, *Temples of the Kalachuri Period* (Delhi, 2002): 64.
56. Because the Dāmodarpur cache of plates was found in 1915, they were not edited by Fleet. The best account of the group is found in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*.
57. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 344; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 337 (lines 5–7): *himavacchikhare kokāmukhasvāminaḥ catvāraḥ kulyavāpāḥ śvetavarāhasvāmino 'pi sapta kulyavāpāḥ asmatphalāśaninā puṇyānyābhivṛddhaye ḍoṅgāgrāme pūrvvaṃ mayā apradā atisṛṣṭakās*, "In the Himālayan mountains four parcels (*kulyavāpa*) of Kokamukhasvāmin and seven parcels (*kulyavāpa*) of Śvetavārhasvāmin, land not yielding anything, was formerly given by me in the village of Ḍoṅgā for the augmentation of merits [and] with the hope of reward for us." The land is described as *apradā*, the meaning of which needs discussion before proceeding. Maity, *Economic Life*, 29, notes *apradā* may mean "not yielding anything" in addition to "not previously granted." The second suggestion cannot be accepted because for this meaning to hold the word would have to be *apradatta*. The charters relating to Śvetavarāhasvāmin, all of which will be covered here in due course, describe the same pieces of land in slightly different ways and this sheds light on the meaning. Firstly, some land is described as *samudayabāhyāprahatakhila*[*kṣe*]*ttra*-, "fallow land which is unploughed and bereft of revenue" (Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348, lines 6–7, for the terms see also p. 348, n. 2). Then this land is granted according *apradādharmmeṇa*, "the rule for land which is *apradā*" (Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*,

1: 348, line 10). In another grant to Śvetavarāhasvāmin, different parcels of donated land are described as *apradāḥ kṣetrakulyavāpāḥ*, "parcels of land which are *apradā*" (Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 337–38, line 11, also line 6). What is revealing is the fact that the price paid for one *kulyavāpa* of land is the same in both charters (i.e., that land which is *aprahatakhila* and *apradā* cost the same amount of money). This suggests that the same kind of land is being described in slightly different ways and thus that *apradā* is best understood as "not yielding anything." The value of the coinage is taken up in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* 3: 121, n. 162. For the units of measure, Sircar, "Kulyavāpa, Droṇavapa and Āḍhavāpa," in *Bhārata Kaumudī*, 2: 943–48.

58. The location of these shrines and textual references to them are explored in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 343, but read against Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 336–39. Śvetavarāha, our prime concern as Kokāmukhasvāmin receives no further attention in the epigraphic records, is a form associated with Kṛtayuga, *Matsya Purāṇa* (248: 30): *tvaṃ hi śuklaḥ kṛtayuge*. In its early history at least, the white form of Varāha would appear to be linked with the Vājasaneya who, to judge from the Nidhanpur plates of Bhāskarvarman, were strong in the northeast; see Padmanath Bhattacharya, "Two Lost Plates of the Nidhanpun Copper-Plates of Bhaskaravarman," *EI* 19 (1927–28): 115–25.
59. Here I follow the reading given in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 337–38 (lines 7–12) *tad aham tatkṣetrasāmīpyabhūmau tayor adya kokāmukhasvāmiśvetavarāhasvāminor nāmalliṅgam ekaṃ* (read: *etad*) *devakuladvayam etat koṣṭhikādvayañ ca kārayitum icchāmy*, "Thus on the land in the neighbourhood of that field I now wish to erect these two shrines (*devakula*) and these two granaries (*koṣṭhika*) [all of which] bear the mark (*liṅga*) of these two [gods] Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin."
60. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 361–63; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 346–50, number 39. The date of this charter is problematic, a question explored in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
61. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348 (lines 6–10).
62. As noted by Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122, n. 3, *phuṭṭa* is a regular Prakrit formation. In Prakrit inscriptions, however, we find the phrase *khaṇḍapullasaṇṭhappasa cāusāle*; see Falk, "The Pātaganḍigūḍem Copper-plate Grant," 276 (lines 6–7). The meaning is elucidated by the Bhamodra Mohotā inscription of Droṇasiṃha in which slightly different words are used; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 426–29 (line 5): *devakulasya ca patitaviśīrṇapratisaṃskāraṇārthaṃ*, the sense being the "repair of the temple should it be fallen and broken." The full passage is translated in this chapter in note 79. This wording is partially presaged by a Kuṣāṇa inscription, which records a temple that was broken, fallen down, and in a ruined state (*devaku[laṃ bha]gnapatitaviśirṇa[ṃ] d[ṛ]śya*), Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 138–39 (line 3). My feeling is that these records refer to the actual fabric of the building, while inscriptions using *khaṇḍaphuṭṭa* refer to ritual objects, which might be broken. Bhandarkar's understanding of *devakule khaṇḍaphuṭṭa* as "the execution of repairs to fissures and cracks" cannot be right, and he ignores the word *devakule*; see Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 363. On the eventual Sanskritisation of *phuṭṭa-* see note 41 in this chapter.
63. Note that *caru*, one offering proposed by Amṛtadeva, is supposed to be served in an earthenware dish called *carusthālī*, see Jan Gonda, *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites* (Leiden, 1980): 179–81.
64. For the bath with milk, see Gudrun Bühnemann, *Pūjā: A Study in Smārta Ritual* (Vienna, 1988): 141–2; for a catalogue of the many ritual uses of milk, see Gonda,

*Vedic Ritual*, 182–84. The first reference to the bathing of an image is found in the copper-plate of the Valkhā king Bhuluṇḍa, dated year 59, see Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 28 (line 5): *snapanabalicarugandhadhūpasattramālyopayojyaṃ*, "the provision of garlands, *sattra*, incense, perfume, *caru*, *bali* and bathing." It would appear that *puṣpa* and *mālya* were differentiated, see ibid., 8 (line 5): *balicarudhūpagandhapuṣpamālyopayojyaṃ*. Also notable is a phrase in one of the Sanjeli plates, which may refer to milk: *gandhadhūpamālyapayikaḥ pratisaṃskārārthaṃ*, Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 16 (line 10).

65. The point is proven by two charters dealing with Piṣṭapurikā Devī: Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 114 (line 13): *balicarusattropayogārthaṃ*, and ibid., 131 (line 13): *balicarusattrapravarttanāya*.
66. Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 10 (line 5): *devasya balicarusatradhūpagandhamalyopayojyam*.
67. Ibid., 1–2.
68. Ibid., 6–7.
69. Read: *devakīyakarṣakāḥ*.
70. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, edited by R. S. Nagar, K. L. Joshi and M. A. Vedalankar, 4 vols. (Delhi, 1981–84) 2: 274: *parivrāṇmuniśākyeṣu cokṣeṣu śrotriyeṣu ca | śiṣṭā ye caiva liṅgasthāḥ saṃskṛtaṃ teṣu yojayet* (17: 38). V. S. Agrawala identified the Ārya Cokṣas with the Caukhaliyas of Gujarāt and Madhya Pradesh who are devotees of Nārāyaṇa, Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, xv; the latter additionally take *cokṣā duṣṭā iti prasiddhāḥ*, Utpala *ad Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (87: 43) *cokṣavadhāḥ*, "the killing of honest men," as referring to these people, but this is unlikely. As to date, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* would appear to belong to the Gupta period, see Klara Gönc-Moačanin, "The *Nāṭyaśāstra* as a (Distorting?) Mirror to the Epic/Purāṇic Myth Image: the Question of its Dating," in *Stages and Transitions*, 221–38.
71. The issue is theorised in Sheldon Pollock, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis," 197–247; see, however, our caveats in the introduction.
72. Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 8–9. The god's estate is called a *devāgrāhāra*; the term is taken up later.
73. Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 10, 13.
74. D. C. Sircar, "Amudalapadu Plates of Vikramāditya I, Year 5," *EI* 32 (1957–58): 175–84: *saptamātṛbhir abhivarddhitānāṃ kārttikeyaparirakṣaṇaprāptakalyāṇaparaṃparāṇāṃ bhagavannārāyaṇaprasādasamāsāditavarāhalāñchanekṣaṇakṣaṇavaśīkṛtāśeṣamahībhṛtāṃ calikyānāṃ*. The mention of Varāha in these plates has already drawn attention in Section 1.10.
75. For the royal insignia, see Chapter 1, note 97.
76. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122 (line 10): *balicarusattrapravarttanādy anuṣṭhānena*. A preliminary version of this section appeared in my "The Formation of Temple Ritual in the Gupta Period: *pūjā* and *pañcamahāyajña*," in *Prajñādhara: Essays in Asian Art History, Epigraphy and Culture in Honour of Gouriswar Bhattacharya* edited by Gerd Mevissen (Delhi, 2009). I have revised several readings for publication here thanks to suggestions received from Hans T. Bakker.
77. R. R. Halder, "The Sohawal Copper-Plate Inscription of Maharaja Sarvanatha – the Year 191," *EI* 19 (1927–28): 129 (lines 13–14) *svapuṇyābhivṛddhaye svapratiṣṭhāpitakabhagavatsvāmikārttikeyasvāmipādānāṃ khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisa(ṃ)skārakaraṇāya balicarusattragandhadhūpadīpatailapravarttanāya cātisṛṣṭaḥ*, "for the augmentation of my own merit, [the village] is allotted for the repair of whatever may be broken and torn and for the maintenance of *bali*, *caru*, *sattra*, perfume, incense, lights and oil [for the lights] of the Lord Svāmi Kārttikeya which I have

established." This inscription, discovered after Fleet wrote, is dated Gupta year 191 and the earliest of Śarvanātha. The second Śarvanātha inscription is dated Gupta year 193; Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 127; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 392 (lines 14–16): *svapratiṣṭhāpitakabhagavatpādānām ādityabhaṭṭārakapādānān ca khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃskārakāraṇāya balicarusattragandhadhūpamālyadīpapravarttanāya cātisṛṣṭhaḥ*, "[the village] is allotted for the repair of whatever may be broken and torn and for the maintenance of the *bali, caru, sattra*, perfume, incense, garlands and lights of the sublime Bhagavat (= Viṣṇu) and the sublime Ādityabhaṭṭārka (= Sūrya)." The wording shows the offerings belong to the gods; as noted by Fleet, ibid., 123. n. 5, the use of "feet" (*pāda*) indicates customary respect. I have discussed the compound *gandhadhūpa* in my "Formation of Temple Ritual." Fragrance and incense appear in the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, edited by R. Shama Shastri (Mysore, 1920) *Viṣṇupratiṣṭhākalpaḥ* (1: 13: 24–33), where items are listed and the procedure for their offering described.

78. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 289: *śrīmihireśvarasya kapāleśvarabalicarusat[*t]rasragdhūpadīpadānāya*. This record is taken up in detail later, see note 246 in this chapter.

79. In the Bhamodra Mohotā copper-plate inscription dated Gupta Valabhī year 183, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 426–29. The wording and organisation of this record exhibit some unusual characteristics. The relevant portions read: *śrībhagatyāḥ pāṇḍurājyāyāḥ .. balicaruvaiśvadevādyānāṃ kriyāṇāṃ samutsarppaṇārthaṃ trisaṃgamakagrāmo gandhadhūpadīpatailamālyopayojyaṃ devakulasya ca patitaviśīrṇapratisaṃskaraṇārthaṃ satropayojyasya sahiraṇyādeyaḥ sahānyaiś cādānāir .. brahmadeyasthittyā udakātisargeṇa nisṛṣṭhaḥ*. I venture a translation as follows: "The village of Trisaṃgamaka, created according to the customary usage of a *brahmadeya* with libations of water, is bestowed with its income, whether in profit or loss, for the required provision of a *sattra*, for the purpose of restoring the temple should it be fallen down and broken, for the required provision of perfume, incense and oil for lamps and for the celebration of the rites of *bali, caru* and *vaiśvadeva* and so forth of the goddess Śrī Bhagavatī Pāṇḍurājyā." For the meaning of *kriyāṇāṃ samutsarppaṇārthaṃ*, sometimes °*kriyotsarppaṇārtham*, "for the purpose of advancing ritual acts," see O. v. Hinüber, *IIJ* 47 (2004): 315. Sircar suggested (ibid., 428, n. 6) that the phrase *sahiraṇyādeyaḥ sahānyaiś cādānāir* means "with revenue in cash to be paid by the state" and that *hānya* and *ādāna* perhaps indicate "loss" and "gain." But there is no indication that the state will provide income; rather, the income will be derived from the granted village with the state announcing that it will neither tax the estate if it turns a profit nor subsidise it should it make a loss.

80. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (lines 11–12): *bhagavatyaḥ paṣṭhapurikādevyāḥ* [read: *pi-*] *pūjānimittaṃ*.

81. The word *pūjā* first appears in the Ghosuṇḍī stone inscription of king Sarvatāta, possibly of the circa first century CE: *pūjāśilāprakāro nārāyaṇavāṭaka[ḥ]*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 91 (line 3). In the Kuṣāṇa epigraphic corpus, an inscription of Huviṣka dated year 51 records that a monk set up an image of Śākyamuni for the worship of all the Buddhas; Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 64–5 (lines 1–2): ([*bhagava*]*taḥ* [*śāk*]*y*[*am*]*u*[*neḥ**] *pratimā pratiṣṭhāpita sarvapu* [read: *bu*] *ddhapūjār*[*th*]*a*[*m*]). The compound *pūjārtham* anticipates Gupta usage but in Kuṣāṇa inscriptions the offering of flowers and the like is not mentioned. In the Gupta corpus, the Mathurā inscription of year 61 is the first to mention *pūjā*: Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 277–79; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 240 (line 13): *pūjāpuraskāraṃ . . . kuryyād*. We return to this inscription in Section 2.10. Bühnemann, *Pūjā* describes the fully formed ritual but does not seek to explore developments historically or use epigraphic records, thus the need for the discussion

here. Paul Thieme's influential contribution to the problem of origins is taken up at the end of this section.

82. Varāhamihira, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, notably Chapter 84 *dīpalakṣaṇam* and Chapter 77 *gandhayuktiḥ*.
83. Smith, *Reflections*, 146–49, and encyclopaedically but less analytically, Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 696–704, also Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 413–21.
84. The inscriptions mentioning the *pañcamāhayajña* which I have found are: (1) the Dāmodarpur copper-plate of Gupta year 128 in which the applicant seeks support for his five sacrifices: *vijñāpitaṃ a[rha*?]tha mama pa[ñca]mahāyajñapravarttanāny*, Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 289–90 and Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 292–94 (line 6); (2) the Mallasārul copper-plate in which *mahārāja* Vijayasena makes a grant to a brāhmaṇa of the *Ṛgveda* for his five sacrifices: *bāhvṛcavatsasvāmine pañcamahāyajñapravarttanāya*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 372–77 (lines 10 and 14); (3) the Kulaikuri copper-plate of year 120, in which a group of people, seeking to bring merit to their parents, make a donation to a number of brāhmaṇas so they can perform their rites: *pañcamahāyajñapravarttanāya*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 352–55, (line 27); (4) the Nandapur copper-plate of Gupta year 169 recording a grant in favour of another follower of the Ṛgveda so he could do his sacrifices, *pañcamāhayajñapravarttanāya*, N. G. Majumdar, "Nandapur Copper Plate of the Gupta Year 169," *EI* 23 (1935–36): 54–55 (line 4). These are the Gupta-period examples, but the wording continues into the seventh century, for example, *EI* 34 (1961–62): 176 (line 18) with the verb *utsarpaṇa* – "accomplishing, celebrating" – coming into increasing favour. In the Dāmodarpur copper-plate of year 124, the applicant seeks support for his *agnihotra* (i.e., *mamāgnihotropayogāya*), Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 285–86; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 290–92 (line 7). The *agnihotra*, also known as the *sāyaṃprātarhoma*, was a life-long obligation of all twice-born householders; it was to be performed at the beginning and end of each day, the sacrificial material being either rice or barley or grains or, if these were not available, other food; see Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, pp. 415–16.
85. Sten Konow, "Sunao Kala Plates of Samghamasimha," *EI* 10 (1909–10): 72–76 (line 8): *balicaruvaiśvadevāgnihotrahavanapañcamahāyajñakriyotsarpaṇārttham*, "for the purpose of celebrating the rites of the five great sacrifices, *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, agnihotra* and *havana*." The *havana* as a "sacrifice of invocations" can be understood with reference to *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (3: 70), which is taken up later.
86. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 165–67. The date of the Māliā copper-plates is Gupta year 252 (CE 571–72).
87. A few examples may be cited. From the seventh century: V. V. Mirashi, "Mundakhede Plates of Sendraka Jayasakti: Saka 602," *EI* 29 (1951–52): 120 (line 16–17): *balicaruvaiśvade[vā*]gnihotrapañcamahāyajñādi kriyotsarppaṇārthaṃ*. From the eighth century: K. B. Pathak, "Pimpari Plates of Dharavarsha-Dhruvaraja; Saka-Samvat 697," *EI* 10 (1909–10): 88 (lines 47–8): *balicaruvaiśvadevāgni[ho]trātithipañcamahāyajñādikriyotsarppaṇārthaṃ*. From the ninth century: P. L. Gupta, "Nesarika Grant of Govinda III, Saka 727," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 133 (lines 57–8): *balicaruvaiśvadevāgnihotrātithipañcamahāyajñakriyotsarppaṇārthaṃ*.
88. D. C. Sircar, "1. Grant of Bhāvita, [Harsha] Year 48," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 171–73 (line 15): *balicarusattravaiśvadevāgniho[trotsarppaṇ]ārthaṃ*.
89. Padmanatha Bhattacharya, "Two Lost Plates of the Nidhanpur Copper-Plates of Bhāskaravarman," *EI* 19 (1927–28): 120 (line 52) *balicarusatropayogāya saptāṅśā[ḥ*]*. The reduction of the five sacrifices to three is exceptional and suggests that the scribe made an error: *balicarusatropayogāya* should perhaps read *balicarusatrādyupayogāya*.

90. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* 2: 699.
91. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 166–67 (lines 27–9): *etat . . . unnatanivāsīvājasaneyikaṇvavatsagotrabrāhmaṇarudrabhūtaye balicaruvaiśvadevāgnihotrātithipaṃcamahāyājñikānāṃ kriyāṇāṃ samutsarppaṇāttham . . . udakasarggeṇa nisṛṣṭaṃ*, "This [land] was granted with libations of water for the performance of the five great sacrifices *bali, caru, vaiśvadeva, agnihotra* and *atithi* to Rudrabhūti, a brāhmaṇa of the Vatsagotra and follower of the Kāṇva recension of the Vājasaneya school and a resident of Unnata." The libation of water in connection with property is explained in Barnett, *Antiquities of India*, 128; also see Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* 2: 854; Jan Gonda, "Gifts," in *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae IX (The Hague, 1965): 220. Land and women are given away by the same means and equated, in part because women are property, in part because the earth is personified as a women. The ritual of pouring water is shown in the fifth-century Pawāyā relief, discussed and illustrated in Chapter 3. The practice was known in the second century BCE and is shown in the relief sculpture at Bhārhūt depicting the gift of Jetavana; see A. Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut* (London, 1879): plates 28 and 57. As noted by Cunningham, ibid., 87: "in the very middle of the composition there is Anāthapiṇḍaka himself carrying a vessel, just like a tea kettle, in both hands, for the purpose of pouring water over the Buddha's hands as a pledge of the completion of the gift."
92. There are two recensions of the Vājasaneya: Mādhyandina, and Kāṇva, see Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 331–38.
93. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (5: 120): *bhāryāratiḥ śucir bhṛtyabhartā śrāddhakriyārataḥ | namaskāreṇa mantreṇa pañcayajñān na hāpayet*. Translation in A. F. Stenzler, *Yâjnavalkya's Gesetzbuch* (Berlin and London, 1849) ch. 1, v. 121: An seiner Gattin Freude habend, rein, die Diener erhaltend, an der Vollziehung der Todenopfer sich freuend, versäume er nicht die fünf Opfer mit dem Sprüche, welcher mit dem Worte: "Verehrung" beginnt.
94. O. v. Hinüber, *IIJ* 47 (2004): 315, for additional comments on *divirapati*-s based on Maitraka inscriptions.
95. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 165 (line 5): *manvādipraṇītavidhividhānadharmmā dharmmarāja iva*.
96. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (3: 70) *adhyāpanaṃ brahmayajñaḥ pitṛyajñas tu tarpaṇam | homo daivo balir bhauto nṛyajño 'tithipūjanam*. English translation with citation of commentaries in Bühler, SBE, vol. 25: 87–88; more recently Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 112. Another example to show the divergence of the listings: the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, edited by R. Shama Sastri (4: 4–13) gives *devayajña, pitṛyajña, bhūtayajña, manuṣyayajña, brahmayajña*.
97. *Mānavadhārmaśāstra* (8: 41): *jātijānapadān dharmān śreṇīdharmāś ca dharmavit | samīkṣya kuladharmāṃś ca svadharmaṃ pratipādayet*. The problem is explored in Derrett, "Religious Commands and Legal Commands," 75–96.
98. D. R. Bhandarkar, "Cambay Plates of Govinda IV; Saka Samvat 852," *EI* 7 (1902–03): 26–47 (lines 46–49). The *tulāpuruṣa* ceremony is taken up in Annette Schmiedchen, "Die tulāpuruṣa-Zeremonie: Das rituelle Aufwiegen des Herrschers gegen Gold," in *Beiträge des Südasien-Instituts der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* 12 (2003): 21–49; Schmidcher, "The Ceremony of Tulāpuruṣa: The Purāṇic Concept and the Epigraphic Evidence," in *Script and Image: Papers on Art and Epigraphy, Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, edited by Adalbert J. Gail, Gerd J. R. Mevissen, and Richard Salomon (Delhi, 2006): 145–84. We find the *tulāpuruṣadāna* mentioned even in the early fourteenth century, see closing lines in Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura, *Vivādaratnākara*,

edited by Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtitīrtha, Bibliotheca Indica no. 103 (Calcutta, 1931): 676. The village of Kapitthaka, mentioned in Utpala *ad* Varāhamihira, was a place of astronomical study, see note 223 in this chapter.

99. Read: *tapodhanānām*.

100. Bhandarkar, "Cambay Plates," lines 54–58 who, however, has not understood the details correctly. Much of the terminology is explained in Chitrabhanu Sen, *A Dictionary of Vedic Rituals* (Delhi, 1978), but my comments and translation are informed by discussions with Dr. Vishwa Mohan Jha to whom many thanks are due. The *kāmya* are optional rites, performed for a desired purpose, as opposed to *nitya*, which are indispensable. The *darśapūrṇamāsa* are sacrifices on the full and new moon days; *cāturmāsya* consist of three separate sacrifices each of which takes place after four months, whence the name; the *aṣṭakā* is a rite for dead ancestors, performed on the eighth day after the dark fortnight; *śrāddha*, also for the ancestors and here described as *pakṣādi* (i.e., to be performed at the beginning of a fortnight, to contrast with *aṣṭakā*). The *āgrayaṇa* are domestic rites performed by one who has not set up a sacrificial fire. All five are here called *iṣṭi* sacrifices (i.e., rites involving the offering of milk, butter, rice etc. [*havis*] as opposed to soma or an animal offering). From this point the inscription turns to specific preparations: *caru* is cooked porridge, *puroḍāśa*, a sacrificial cake. The *sthālīpāka* is a mess of rice or barley in an earthen dish used as sacrificial food, see Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 179; *niyama* are rules of correct conduct, cleanliness, and so on, see ibid., 194. Among the priests: the Maitrāvaruṇa is the first assistant to the Hotṛ, his role explored in C. Z. Minkowski, *Priesthood in Ancient India: A Study of the Maitrāvaruṇa Priest* (Vienna, 1991); the Brāhmaṇācchaṃsin is an assistant Hotṛ whose recitations help the *brahmán*, the general supervisor responsible for correcting errors in the performance; the Grāvastut is another assistant to the Hotṛ who recites the *grāvastotra*; Agnīdh = Āgnīdhra, the priest who assists the *brahmán* and kindles the fire. The *prapā* is a place for water, perhaps with use restricted by caste barriers, see note 134 in this chapter. Note that *pratiśraya*, "a place of refuge," is distinguished from a *sattra*, a "temple hospice," an explanation of which is taken up later. The *vṛṣotsarga*, the ritual accompanying the release of a young bull, is discussed in Shingo Einoo, "Notes on *vṛṣotsarga*," in *The Vedas: Texts, Language & Ritual*, edited by Arlo Griffiths and Jan E. M. Houben (Groningen, 2004): 35–48.

101. Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 417–20.

102. *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra* (2: 8: 25) cited and discussed in Smith, *Reflections, 148; other examples following an analogous pattern*, *Viṣṇusmṛti* (67: 4–23) and *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram*, edited by W. Caland (Calcutta, 1927) 10: 8; translated by Caland as *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram: The Domestic Rules and Laws of the Vaikhānasa School belonging to the Black Yajurveda*, Bibliotheca Indica No. 251 (Calcutta, 1929).

103. Briefly mentioned in Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 418, and taken up in detail later.

104. Sircar, *Political and Administrative Systems*, 6; D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v., *bhāga*, meaning a "share," refers to the king's share of the crops, which are payable by his tenants. U. N. Ghoshal, *Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System* (Calcutta, 1972): 393.

105. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (3: 74) *japo 'huto huto homaḥ prahuto bhautiko baliḥ | brāhmyaṃ hutaṃ dvijāgryārcā prāśitaṃ pitṛ tarpaṇam*. The terms are discussed in Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 345–46.

106. C. J. Fuller, "Sacrifice (Bali) in the South Indian Temple," in *Religion and Society in South India*, edited by V. Sudarsen et al. (Delhi, 1987): 26. Fuller noted that *bali* in the

south Indian context is understood as an animal sacrifice and contrasted with the vegetarian *pūjā*. This is, in fact, not unique to the south. M. Biardeau and Malamoud, *Le sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1976): 138–53. Elsewhere the *bali*-pedestal is termed *balipiṇḍikā*, see Tadeusz Skorupski, *Kṛityāsaṃgraha: A Compendium of Buddhist Rituals* (Tring, 2002): 156–57.

107. A misguided attempt has been made to identify the later offering-tables as "solar altars," but without supporting proof: B. V. Shetti, "Saura-Pīṭha or the Solar Altar," in *Indian Numismatics, History, Art and Culture: Essays in Honour of P. L. Gupta*, edited by Savita Sharma and Sanjay Garg (Delhi, 1992) 2: 335–40.
108. For the inscription, see Fleet's reading in Burgess, "Rock-cut Temples at Bādāmi," *IA* 6 (1877): 363 (line 13). The lotus for the *bali*-offering is shown in the plan of Cave 2 illustrated in Burgess, *Report on the First Season's Operations in the Belgâm and Kaladgi Districts*, Archaeology Survey of Western India (London, 1874): Plate XXII.
109. Sen, *Vedic Rituals*, 115; Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 1133; for more detail, see Falk, "Zum Ursprung der Sattra-Opfer", *ZDMG* 6, Supplement (1985): 275–81; on the epic transformations, see Minkowski, "Snakes, Sattras and the Mahābhārata," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, edited by Arvind Sharma (Leiden, 1991): 384–400.
110. Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 126 (lines 5–6) *māṇacchandogena iṣ[ṭv]ā sattre[ṇ]a dvā[d]aśar[ā]ttreṇa yūpaḥ pratiṣṭhā[p]itaḥ* (i.e., "Māṇacchandoga [a Māṇa of the Sāmaveda?], having performed a *sattra* lasting twelve days, has set up this sacrificial post"). The record is dated year [1*]24 in the reign of Vāsiṣka. As the Kuṣāṇa era began in Spring 127, this dates CE 251, see Falk, "The Yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the Era of the Kuṣāṇas," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 (2001): 121–36. For the position of Vāsiṣka, see J. Cribb, "Early Indian History," in *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*, edited by M. Willis (London, 2000): 48.
111. For example, F. Kielhorn, "The Sasbahu Temple Inscription of Mahipala, of Vikrama-Samvat 1150," *IA* 40 (1886), line 39; v. 102: *dadau rājāniruddhāya tena sattraṃ pravarttate*. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. The brief comment offered in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348, n. 5, is sufficient to show the degree to which the *sattra* and other offerings have not been properly analysed.
112. *Hitopadeśa*, edited by M. R. Kale, 6th edition (Delhi, 1967): 37 (2: 34): *pṛṣṭhataḥ sevayed arkaṃ jaṭhareṇa hutāśanam*.
113. Hospitality is reviewed in Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 209–10.
114. The Mathurā inscription of Huviṣka dated year 28 records the establishment of an *akṣayanīvi* for the spiritual benefit of Huviṣka. The money was deposited with guilds and the interest that accrued was to be used for feeding brāhmaṇas and the needy at a *puṇyaśālā*. Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 140 (lines 6–7): [*ṣ*]*y*[*a*]*ti* [*nai*]*ty*[*a*]*k*[*ā*]*tith*[*i*]*bhyāś ca brā*[*hma*]*ṇebhyaḥ kāriṣya*[*ti*]; S. Konow, "Mathura Brahmi Inscription of the year 28," *EI* 21 (1931–32): 60–61; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 151–53; corrections and comments in Falk, "A Copper Plate Donation Record and Some Seals from the Kashmir Smast," *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie* 23 (2003): 11, n. 14.
115. There are three inscriptions relating to *sattra*-s from Garhwa, all with near identical texts: (1) inscription of Candragupta I, dated Gupta year 88, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 37–8; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 244–47; (2) Garhwa inscription of Kumāragupta I, dated Gupta year 98, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 41; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 271; and (3) undated inscription of Kumāragupta, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 40; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 294.

116. The term *sāmānya* is used to indicate all kinds of brāhmaṇas rather than ones belonging to a specific *gotra* or Veda. The Garhwa *sattra* was meant to be *sadā*, perpetual. The case relationship is not stated in the compound and is, therefore, uncertain; the *sattra* could be of the brāhmaṇas (i.e., established by them) or for the brāhmaṇas (i.e., for their benefit). I find it difficult to accept the comment in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 247, n. 1, which makes *sadāsattra* a place name; see Amarasiṃha's definition that a *sattra* involves perpetual giving (*yajñe sadādāne*, see note 134 in this chapter).
117. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 286–87 (lines 8–11) *svāmimahāsenasyāyatane . . . kṛt[v]ā . . . prāsādāgrābhirūpaṃ guṇavarabhavanaṃ [dharmmasa*]ttraṃ yathāvat*. The care with which the work was done is emphasised by *yathāvat*, "in a proper manner."
118. Krishnamacharlu, "The Nala Inscription at Podagadh; 12th year," *EI* 21 (1931–32): 153–57; G. Ramdas, "Pushkari," *JBRS* 33 (1947): 7–19. The palaeography of the record compares to the Tāḷagunda inscription that has been assigned to the mid-fifth century, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 474. The Poḍāgarh inscription is thus the oldest definition of a *sattra* as a charitable place for brāhmaṇas, ascetics, and the destitute. In lines 5–8, Poḍāgarh reads: *pādamūlaṃ kṛtaṃ viṣṇo [rājñā śrī skandava-*]rmmṇā* || [4*] *pūjārtham asya caiveha sodakam bhūridakṣiṇam* [|*] *puruṣāya puraṃ [dattam atrācandrā*]rkkatāraka[ṃ]* || [5*] *satropabhojyaṃ viprāṇāṃ yatīnāñ ca viśeṣata[ḥ]* [|*] *dīnānā[m a]py anāthānāṃ ca sarvvaśaḥ* || [6*]. The sense, first of all, is that the king made a *pādamūla* of Viṣṇu. Bakker visualises this as a shrine for Viṣṇu's footprints; see Bakker, "The Footprints of the Lord," pp. 24–5, and Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 65–66. The king then gave, for the purpose of *pūjā*, a *pura* for the god along with rich presents (*bhūridakṣiṇa*). The *pura* could have been an *agrahāra*, as the editor of the record suggested, but because the term *agrahāra* was known and widespread in inscriptions from the fifth century, a different meaning was probably intended. On the basis on the Bilsaḍ record, just cited, we can assume that it was some kind of precinct or enclosure next to or part of the shrine itself; see also my "Some Notes on the Palaces of the Imperial Gurjara Pratīhāras," *JRAS* 5 (1995): 351–60, and compare the synonymous *avasatha* in note 121 in this chapter. Anyway, the point is that the *pura* is described as *sattropabhojya-*. So the *pura* was established so it could be "enjoyed as *sattra*" by brāhmaṇas (*vipra*), medicants (*yati*), the wretched (*dīna*), and the helpless (*anātha*).
119. Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 15–16; *mahārāja* Bhūta is comparable to Dhanyaviṣṇu, the local ruler at Eran who accommodated himself to Hūṇa power in the Vidiśā region. The historical framework is given in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
120. As indicated by an earlier plate dated year 3, Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 14 (line 3).
121. Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 15–16, with corrections in addition to those offered by the editors. I have dealt with the terminological problems in this inscription in my "Formation of Temple Ritual." Worth repeating here is the fact that *yogodvahanaṃ*, for which see Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* (New Haven, 1953) 2: 448, is an unacknowledged borrowing from Buddhism as is the conceptual organisation of the institution itself, a fact inadvertently revealed by the use of *avasatha*. This term appears in Buddhist canonical lists of *deyadharma*, things that are suitable for giving to the Triple Gem.
122. Read: *-yāyau*. The meaning of *udraṅga* is taken up in O. v. Hinüber, *IIJ* 47 (2004): 313.

123. Following Hans Bakker's suggestions, I now take all the preceding phrases as qualifying *mātaram* and thus understand the text as: *paramadevatām pujyām arccanīyan urvvījantrīṃ rājñīm vīrāḍhyākhyāṃ.*
124. The scribe should have added here a word like *pravarttanāya.*
125. Read: *udakātisarggeṇātisṛṣṭāv.*
126. Read: *prāpitāvasathopagatānāṃ.*
127. Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1998): 4.
128. Ibid., 45.
129. That the *sattra* drew on *deyadharma* has just been noted. The Buddhist encounter with what we can call early Hinduism involved not only competition for patronage but a profound clash of institutions, beliefs, and social ideals, see Giovanni Verardi, "Images of Destruction: An Enquiry into Hindu Icons in Their Relation to Buddhism," *Buddhist Art 1: Papers From the First Conference of Buddhist Studies held in Naples in May 2001* (Kyoto, 1973):1–36; and Verardi "Religions, Rituals, and the Heaviness of Indian History," *Annali* (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli) 56 (1996): 215–53. As an example of how Buddhism was circumscribed from the fourth century, we may note the measures in the *Arthaśāstra,* which, under the rules for the management of villages, stipulate that no religious person should be allowed to enter them except *vānaprastha*-s and congregations of local origin; see Barnett, *Antiquities of India,* 106. See also Bhandarkar's comments in CII 3 (1981): 246, n. 2 regarding *gṛhapati.* This class of agriculturalists appear as *gahapati* in Buddhist dedicatory inscriptions; they were a key part of the lay patronage of the Buddhist dispensation; see Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi, 1987): esp. Chapter 3. For some of the difficulties faced by Buddhists in the fourth century, see Falk, "Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Copper-plate Grant," 281.
130. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions,* 1: 341–42 (lines 6–7): *gandhapuṣpadīpadhūpādipra|varttanāya**] [*ta**]*sya bhikṣusaṃghasya ca cīvarapiṇḍapātaśayanāsanaglānapratyayabhaiṣajyādipratibhogāya vihāre [ca] kaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃskārakaraṇāya.* The four things are the *deyadharma* encountered in Pāli texts as a monk's basic necessities: his robe (*cīvara*), begging bowl (*piṇḍapāta*), seat and bed (*senāsana*), and medical support in case of illness (*gilāna paccaya bhesajja parikkhāra*).
131. The harmonisation of Vedism and theism at the hands of the Vaikhānasas provides the clearest case, see the ritual outlined at the end of Section 2.6. The theoretical issues are explored in Sheldon Pollock, "The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Indian Intellectual History," *JAOS* 105 (1985): 499–519 and Pollock, "Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India," *JAOS* 109 (1989): 603–10. A Veda-based hermeneutic for expanding the scope of orthodoxy was not, however, exclusive to Mīmāṃsā, see Smith, *Reflections,* 20–29.
132. Bhandarkar, "Camby Plates," 26–47 (lines 48–49) *devakulebhyaḥ khaṇḍasphuṭitādinimittaṃ gandhadhūpapuṣpadīpanaivedyādy upacārārthaṃ tapodhanasya sattrottarāsaṅgadānādy arthañ ca.*
133. The same arrangement is suggested by the Bhamodra Mohotā copper-plate, for text see note 79 in this chapter.
134. Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana,* edited by A. A. Ramanathan (3: 3: 181): *sattram ācchādane yajñe sadādāne vane 'pi ca.* The *sattra* is not inexorably attached to the temple, and Amarasiṃha does not mention food, perhaps because he is a Buddhist and appreciates the potency of the institution. So he reflects *Arthaśāstra* (2: 35: 3) where *sattra* is listed as one of several things which demarcate village boundaries: *caityadevagṛhasetubandaśmaśānasattraprapāpuṇyasthānavivītapathi,* "sanctuaries,

temples, dams, cremation grounds, wells, *sattra*-s, holy spots, pastures and paths." The long compound is not very helpful, but it at least tells us that a *sattra* was an actual place, not simply a function or a ritual, and that it was associated with wells (*prapā*) and holy spots (*puṇyasthāna*), places where wandering ascetics might be found, as in the Cambay plate of Govinda IV (see note 98 in this chapter for references). Also *AŚ* (5: 2: 39) where we have a *siddhapuṇyasthāna*.

135. K. N. Dikshit, "Three Copper Plate Inscriptions from Gaonri," *EI* 23 (1935–36): 101–13 (line 9) *tulāpuruṣād anuttaratā mayā prathamaṃ karodakātisarggeṇa sahasrapramāṇamahājanāya sattrārthaṃ*. The plate is a palimpsest, the subsequent Paramāra record, having as its object also a *sattra*, was edited by Dikshit and given again in H. V. Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the Paramāras, Chandellas, Kachchapaghātas and Two Minor Dynasties*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 7 (Delhi, 1978–91): 18–24. The donees are recorded as coming from different parts of India, a special historical problem reviewed in Michael Witzel, "Toward a History of the Brahmins," *JAOS* 113 (1993): 264–68. The creation of a *sattra*, which provided food and garments for brāhmaṇas, anticipates the fully-formed cult of Jagannāth; see Jakob Rösel, "Land Endowment and Sacred Food: The Economy of an Indian Temple," *Archive européennes de sociologie* 24 (1983): 44–59. The Vedic roots are explained in Brian K. Smith, "Eaters, Food, and Social Hierarchy in Ancient India: A Dietary Guide to a Revolution of Values," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 177–205; the contemporary sociology introduced in A. Appadurai, "Gastro-Politics in Hindu South Asia," *American Ethnologist* 8.3 (1981): 494–511.

136. Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 180–81; Böthlingk and Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, s.v. *caru*.

137. Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 113, 368, 402, 438.

138. Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, edited by A. A. Ramanathan (2: 7: 22): *ṛk sāmidhenī dhāyyā ca yā syād agnisamiṃdhane | gāyatrīpramukhaṃ chaṃdo havyapāke caruḥ pumān; ad* Mallinātha: *havyapāke caruḥ pumān | havyapāka iti sthālyādiḥ | tasmin caru śabdaḥ syāt | caruṃ paktvāgniṃ prajvālya paristīrya teṣu caruṃ nidhāyābhighāryā ityādi vacanair havye 'pi syāt*.

139. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram* (10: 10): *caruṃ juhuyāt* etc.

140. Ibid., (6: 17): *pakkenānnena vaiśvadevena devebhyo homo devayajñaḥ*. For the *homa* in the smārta setting, see Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 346–47 and in detail Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 207 ff.

141. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 79–80; *Rauravāgama*, translated by B. Dagens and M.-L. Barazer-Billoret (Pondicherry, 2000) 46: 80–99, Passim; Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 705–06 asserts in his detailed discussion of *devayajña* that "in medieval and modern times the ancient idea of *homa* receded far into the background, its place taken by an elaborate procedure of *devapūjā*." This is only true from a modern north Indian perspective; otherwise, the statement is very misleading.

142. Skorupski, *Krityāsaṃgraha*, 22–25. Yael Bentor, "Interiorized Fire Rituals in India and Tibet," *JAOS* 120 (2000): 594–613.

143. As in the copper-plate of Govinda IV cited in note 98 in this chapter, but note *ābharaṇa* suggests an amulet in addition to simple decoration. See Gonda, "Ābharaṇa," *New Indian Antiquary* 2 (1939–40): 69–75; more broadly E. Villiers, *Amulette und Talismane* (München, 1927).

144. For the inscription, Fleet's reading in Burgess, "Rock-cut Temples at Bādāmi," *IA* 6 (1877): 363 (lines 12–13) *viṣṇoḥ pratimāpratiṣṭhāpanābhyudayanimittaṃ ... nārāyaṇabalyupahārārthaṃ*. Also in *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (60: 17), a *bali*-offering is made prior to the installation of an image; the text and translation are given in

Section 2.10. The wording of *VaiSS* (*praśna* 10) hints at wider uses of the Nārāyaṇa *bali*, but otherwise the sacrifice is known only in *Baudhāyanagṛhyapariśiṣṭa* (3: 20–21); see Caland, *Domestic Rules*, 221, n. 9. It is also appears in *Baudhāyanagṛhyapariśiṣṭa* (2: 13), see P. N. U. Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra* (Amersfoort, 1922): 3 (lines 23–29).

145. Thus, in Bühnemann, *Pūjā*, 33, we find it said that the appendix to the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra* "shows Hindu ritual at an early stage mixed-up with Vedic ritual," cited and endorsed in Shingo Einoo, "The Formation of the Pūjā Ceremony," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* (Festschrift für Paul Thieme) 20 (1996): 74. The impression of a "mix-up" is also given in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 116, n. 3 and in Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. A different view in Smith, *Vedic Sacrifice in Transition*, 2–5, who attributes the decline of old *śrauta* practices to a number of factors, one of which was the emergence of "iconic ritual." As shown here, however, it is more historically correct to juxtapose *gṛhya*-ritual and temple worship. The sacrifices are subject to canonical reductionism in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 138–40. This scholar seeks to establish brāhmaṇas as lofty spiritual leaders unconcerned with temple worship because he is profoundly embarrassed by the veneration of images and by the brāhmaṇas who controlled temples and so earned a living. We can now safely dispense with all of this. The background of the period in which Bhandarkar was writing can be understood from C. J. Fuller, *The Renewal of the Priesthood* (Princeton, 2003).

146. Renou, "'Connection' en védique, 'cause' en bouddhique," in *Dr. C. Kunhan Raja Presentation Volume* (Madras, 1946): 45. The secondary literature on *bandhu* is summarised in Smith, *Reflections*, 31, n. 3.

147. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (2: 2: 2: 6). The sources that claim brāhmaṇas are gods on earth are taken up in Gonda, "Gifts," 203.

148. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 475 (line 1) *bhūsurā dvijapravarās sāmargya-jurvvedavādinaḥ*. The inscription of Govinda IV quoted above at length maintains the parallel: both gods and brāhmaṇas receive grants of land and money from the king.

149. Gonda, *Vedic Ritual*, 183–4 and for a full account of particulars Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 542–45. Also Einoo, "The Formation of the Pūjā Ceremony," 85 where the recipients of the *madhuparka* in *gṛhya*-texts are listed.

150. *VSm* (65: 12): *dadhikrāvṇa iti madhuparkam*, "With (the one *mantra* beginning with the words, 'I have praised) Dadhikrāvaṇa,' a *madhuparka*."

151. Rösel, "Land Endowment and Sacred Food," 52–4. The guest model is not unique to Jagannāth and is widespread in ancient and modern practice. Textual sources documenting this include the *Āgniveśyagṛhyasūtra*, *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra* and *Ṛgvidhāna*; ibid., 34. Also Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, notably *Viṣṇupratiṣṭhākalpa* (2:14, the consecration of Viṣṇu) and *Mahāpuruṣasyāharaḥ paricaryāvidhiṃ* (2: 15, the daily worship of the Mahāpuruṣa). I have not explored these texts here because I am not concerned with the hermeneutics of worship but historical developments documented by inscriptions.

152. Thieme, "Indische Wörter und Sitten," in *Kleine Schriften* (Wiesbaden, 1984) 2: 343–70, revised version in *JOR* 27 (1957–58): 1–16; summarised in Bühnemann, *Pūjā*, 30. Thieme pointedly discounted Charpentier's thesis of a "Dravidian origin" for *pūjā*, but the notion has shown remarkable resilience (e.g., Natalia Lidova, *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism* [Delhi, 1994]: 98, where it is argued that the Dravidian origin of the root *pūj* proves "the non-Aryan origin of the *pūjā*"). Of course Gonda and others (e.g., Rocher, *JAOS* 90 [1970]: 343–44) have long ago discounted the explanatory power of the Aryan-Dravidian dialectic.

153. Śabara *ad* Jaimini, *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 9: 1: 10: *iha tu karmmaṇi abhāvaḥ protividhānasya | tasmāt viṣamam atithinā*, "In the case of the sacrifical act, however, there is no injunction of pleasing (the deity). Hence there is no analogy between the case of guests and the sacrifical act." That analogy sits at the heart of the discourse about *pūjā* and is shown by the statements made in the ninth century by the Advaita commentator Vācaspati Miśra in *Bhāmatī* (3: 2: 41) cited and translated in Francis X. Clooney, "Devatādhikaraṇa: A Theological Debate in the Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta Tradition," *JIP* 16 (1988): 290–91.
154. Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras* (Delhi, 1959), repeated with extrapolations in von Steitencron, "Orthodox Attitudes toward Temple Service and Image Worship in Ancient India," *Central Asiatic Journal* 21 (1977): 126–44. Jan Gonda, *The Meaning of the Sanskrit Term Āyatana*, Adyar Library Pamphlet no. 38, (Madras, 1969): 17–19. An introduction to the *sūtra*-genre is given in Jan Gonda, *The Ritual Sūtras*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 1, fasc. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1977). This literature covers a considerable span of time, and attempts to classify the literature into chronological groups is premature; see ibid., 476–88, for a summary of problems. The chronological issues for the *Dharmasūtra*-texts have been summarised in Patrick Olivelle, *The Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha* (Delhi, 2000): 8–9; Olivelle placed *Gautama* in the mid-third century BCE, and in his view *Āpastamba* cannot significantly predate Gautama. However in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 20, n. 32, he inclines to a later date for these texts. The third or second century BCE is, of course, the earliest possible date, so the works could be newer still. In my view, *Āpastamba* reads like a consciously reformed text, set against the accretions of *Baudhāyana*. It is therefore "late" rather than "early" and probably dates to the first few centuries CE.
155. *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra*, edited by A. F. Stenzler as "Indische Hausregeln" in *Abhandlungen für die Kunde de Morgenlandes* 3 (Leipzig, 1864); English translation H. Oldenberg in SBE, vol. 29. The leaf messenger is so called because the offerings were carried on a leaf; for this reason offerings on a leaf are mentioned in *BhG* 9: 26.
156. We can be certain that the offerings at the *caitya* were directed toward a deity from parallel passages in *Pāraskaragṛhyasūtra* (3: 11: 1–11), edited by Mahadeva Gangadhar Bakre with five commentaries (Bombay, 1917); English translation by H. Oldenberg in SBE, vol. 29. After the *Pāraskaragṛhyasūtra* mentions how the sacrifices are directed to a deity, it gives a similar account of how a messenger can be equipped with a weapon or boat to ensure that the offerings are delivered. This version does not actually mention a *devakula* or *caitya*, but it is clear that a sacrificial portion had to be carried to a special place as in the *Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra*.
157. The processes that resulted in the formation of *śrauta* liturgies are explored in T. N. Proferes, "Poetics and Pragmatics in the Vedic Liturgy for the Installation of the Sacrificial Post," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 317–50.
158. A. Ghosh and H. Sarkar, "Beginnings of Scuptural Art in South-east India: A Stele from Amaravati," *Ancient India* 20–21 (1964–65): 168–77; Akira Miyaji, "The Relief of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Scene in Amarāvatī, South India," *Nehan to miroku no zuzogaku* (Tokyo, 1992): 85–112; Keisho Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*, 2 vols. (Kyoto, 1996–98) 1: 280–81. The readings of Ghosh and Sarkar, perpetuated by subsequent writers, are marred by errors of omission and commission, the disregard for the Prakrit being especially infelicitous. That at the bottom of the relief illustrated here, to revise just one example, I read as follows: *chāpālachetiye māro yāchate osaṭhita* [**āyusaṃkhārasa*], "At the Chāpāla-chetiya Māra begs for the renunciation [of life]."

159. The terminology is explored in A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Indian Architectural Terms," *JAOS* 48 (1928): 250–75.
160. John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India* (London, 1936): xxiv.
161. The *stūpa* 3 sculpture pictured in Marshall, *Monuments of Sāñchī*, 3: Plate 93 (g).
162. The case for Bhāillasvāmin at Udayagiri is made in my "Inscriptions from Udayagiri," 46–48 and Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," 32–34. I now find that the location of the Sun temple at Udayagiri was first suggested in 1871 by Bhagwanlal Indraji in *Saurāṣṭra darpan* (Junagarh, 1871), reprinted under the title "Hindustan no purātāni śodh," edited by Muni Jinavijaya, *Puratattva*, 1. 4 and 2. 1 (VS 1979–80/CE 1923–24): 436–44 and 36–41, for which reference I am grateful to Virchand Dharamsey, Mumbai. "In the middle of this ridge are ruins of ancient temples. Most of the temple stones have been taken away by the locals. Still several beautiful stone fragments are to be seen all around and half of the amalaka of the śikhara is lying there. On that basis I presume the temple must have been about 30 feet high and from the carved stones I think this may be the Sun temple and hence the hill's name Udayagiri."
163. *Āpastambagṛhyasūtra* (7: 19–20) edited by Mahādeva Śāstri with commentary of Sudarśanācarya (Mysore, 1893); English translation H. Oldenberg, SBE, vol. 30: 288–91. Mahādeva Śāstri (ibid., p. iii) places Sudarśanācarya in the sixteenth century. Parallel passages to those discussed here are found in *Hiraṇyakeśi* (2: 3: 8–9), translation in Oldenburg, SBE, vol. 30: 220–24. As already noted, I prefer to date *Āpastamba* in the early centuries CE.
164. The place of Īśāna is explained in Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 37–40. The ritual discussed also in Ernst Arbman, *Rudra* (Uppsala, 1922): 104–06.
165. So the commentary: *tayor devasya devyāś ca pratikṛtī kṛtvā madhya jayantasya pratikṛtim*, cited in Arbman, *Rudra*, 105. In the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, discussed in Section 2.10, the worship also involves a temporary image (*pratikṛtī*).
166. Gonda, *Ritual Sūtras*, 627, judged the ritual in *Āpastamba* to be one of the first references to image worship.
167. The date for the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* is taken up by Caland, *Domestic Rules and Laws of the Vaikhānasa School*, xv–xvi. Based on references to betel-chewing and the Greek sequence of planets, the texts seem to have been compiled between the mid-third century and fourth century. The Greek elements are formally incorporated into Indian astronomy by Āryabhaṭṭa in northern and western India but not the south; the earliest dated use of weekdays named after planets is the Eran inscription of Budhagupta; see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335. For a recent summary of astronomical questions, see David Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra: Astral and Mathematical Literature*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 6, fasc. 4 (Wiesbaden, 1981): 12ff, note also p. 47ff for southern astronomy. The relationship between Manu and the Vaikhānasa texts, which seems to suggest Vaikhānasas had some contacts with the north in the fourth century, are discussed by Caland, *Domestic Rules and Laws of the Vaikhānasa School*, xvi–xix with response in Gonda, *Ritual Sūtras*, 480, n. 61 and p. 596, n. 146; Gonda, "Religious Thought and Practice in Vaikhānasa Viṣṇuism," *BSOAS* 40 (1977): 552. A date for the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* in the circa fourth century may have been accepted by textual scholars but the historical setting and socio-cultural agenda, which inspired the Vaikhānasas to assemble their textual corpus, have not been discussed.
168. Caland, *Domestic Rules and Laws of the Vaikhānasa School*, xiv, n. 1.
169. Gonda, "Vaikhānasa Viṣṇuism," 552–53, on which the present account is partly based. The absence of the *aśvamedha* in Vaikhānasa texts and the Vaikhānasa

assertion that certain rites surpass it can be understood as an apology for the loss of this sacrifice from their repertoire – if indeed they ever had it.

170. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (10: 10) and similarly the *Viṣṇubali* (3: 13), which is also centred on an image.
171. Ibid. (4: 10): *viṣṇor nityārcā*. Thus, "Therefore having established in his dwelling (*tasmād gṛhe*) the highest god Viṣṇu (*paramaṃ viṣṇu pratiṣṭhāpya*) he worships (*arcayati*) him at the end of a sacrifice in the evening and in the morning." The passage is discussed in Colas, *Viṣṇu, ses images et ses feux : Les métamorphoses du dieu chez les vaikhānasa* (Paris, 1996): 22–26.
172. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (4: 12): *dvijātir atandrito nityaṃ gṛhe devāyatane vā bhaktyā bhagavantaṃ nārāyaṇam arcayet tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṃ padaṃ gacchatīti vijñāyate.*
173. Ibid., (10: 10): *sarvakāraṇāya yajñeśvarāya yajñātmane*; and *Atrisaṃhitā* (1: 10), cited Gonda, "Vaikhānasa Viṣṇuism," 554.
174. Atri, *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa*, edited by Ramakrishna Kavi (Tirupati, 1943): vii.
175. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 45; Gonda, "Vaikhānasa Viṣṇuism," 553.
176. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 397, the record is dated Kṛta year 461 (CE 404–05). The earlier copper-plate of the Valkhā king Bhuluṇḍa dated [Gupta] year 47 (CE 365–56) uses some of the same vocabulary but without the Vedic references. Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 1–2.
177. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 127 and Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 391 (lines 7–8): *brāhmaṇādīn kuṭumbinas sarvvakārūnś ca samājñāpayati.*
178. The health of the king was all-important for the kingdom as a whole: *Arthaśāstra* (8: 2: 19–25).
179. Heading the list of donees is Viṣṇunandin who I assume to be the priest; of the others, Śaktināga is described as a merchant (*vaṇij*), Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 392 (line 11). The offerings are explained in Section 2.6. For similar arrangements in a grant of Pravarasena II, see V. V. Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 40–1; Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 91. A pair of temples are mentioned in the Uccakalpa grant – one dedicated to Viṣṇu (thus the priest's name) and the other to Sūrya, but it is unnecessary to deal with this complication here. For the relevance of Sūrya Nārāyaṇa, see Chapter 1: 4.
180. Gonda, *Ritual Sūtras*, 623.
181. Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*, 39, 239, 401. The issue is revisted in detail in Olivelle, "When Texts Conceal: Why Vedic Recitation is Forbidden in Certain Times and Places," *JAOS* 126 (2006): 305–22.
182. Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*, 41, 161: *vāṇabherīmṛdaṅgagartārtaśabdeṣu*. The setting is further explored in Tim Lubin, "The Transmission, Patronage, and Prestige of Brahmanical Piety from the Mauryas to the Guptas," in *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, edited by Federico Squarcini (Firenze, 2005): 77–103.
183. The *maha*-s are discussed in V. S. Agrawala, *Ancient Indian Folk Cults* (Varanasi, 1970); more recently K. R. van Kooij, "On Mahas" in *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*, edited by K. R. van Kooij and H. van der Veere, Gonda Indological Studies, vol. 3 (Groningen, 1995): 33–43.
184. On this point, see the discussion of *sattra* in Section 2.6.
185. Tarabout, "Theology as History," p. 68.
186. Barnett, *Antiquities of India*, 1.
187. The rewards can be understood from the results that come from the performance of *vrata*-s, see Grünendahl, *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, passim. For other examples, see note 259 in this chapter.
188. The legal case is outlined in Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, "Religious Endowments in India: The Juristic Personality of Hindu Deities," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende*

*Rechtswissenschaft enschliessch der ethnologischen Rechtsforschung* 67 (1965): 45–100, with response in Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India*, 146–47. Derrett (484) insists that the Śāstrins do not countenance the gods as legal personalities and holders of property but immediately cites epigraphic evidence that points to the contrary. Derrett does not seek to resolve the opposition of actual practice and the textual prescriptions endorsing the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā position. As we shall see in Section 3.5, the contradiction can be addressed historically.

189. E. Hultzsch, "British Museum Plate of Charudevi," *EI* 8 (1905–06): 143–46 (lines 7–8): *dālūre kūḷimahātarakedevakula[ssā] bhagavan nārāyaṇassa*; Lüders, *EI* 10 (1912): appendix, number 1327; Gaur, *Indian Charters on Copper Plates*, 1–2. The field she gave consisted of four *nivartana* of land; for the term, see my "Inscriptions from Udayagiri," 51, n. 21.
190. We leave aside the complexity that two gods were involved; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 337 (lines 6–7): *kokamukhasvāminaḥ catvāraḥ kulyavāpaḥ [śve]tavarāhasvāmino pi sapta kulyavāpāḥ . . . mayā apradā atisṛṣṭakās.*
191. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 70–71; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 318–20; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 310–11. The plate, dated year 146, belongs to the time of Skandagupta. There are earlier copper plates, but these record gifts to brāhmaṇas rather than temples.
192. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122 (line 8–9): *bhagavatpādebhyaḥ devāgrāhāro ['*] tisṛṣṭaḥ . . . cāttra pratiṣṭhāpitakabhāgavatpādānāṃ*. The temple was established, and the grant held, by a family of clerks (*divira*), for which term (ibid., 123, n. 6). The term *devāgrahāra* occurs with frequency, for example: Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 9 (line 7), 13 (line 4); R. C. Majumdar, "Narasingapalli Plate of Hastivarman; the Year 79," *EI* 23 (1935–36): 62–67 (line 15). We assume *devāgrahāra* is a *tatpuruṣa* compound: *devasyāgrahāraḥ*, an "estate of the god," but the Pūrvamīmāṃsaka would argue *devāyāgrahāraḥ*, an "estate for the god" (i.e., that property is relinquished only for the purpose of performing sacrifices because the gods do not exercise ownership). See Section 3.5 where these opposing views are outlined.
193. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. Also s.v. *agrāhāra*, the prevalent spelling in the earliest charters of the fourth century.
194. Dāmodarpur copper-plate of Kumāragupta I, dated Gupta year 124; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 292 (lines 8–9). Numerous examples with similar wording could be cited; see, for example, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 136 (line 10) *ācandrārkkasamakālikau*. As time was told by the sun, moon, and stars – a point explored in Chapter 1 – this statement means that grants were to last until the end of time. Some grants add the earth and ocean, see Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 14–15 (line 5): *ācandrārkkārṇavakṣitisthitisamakālīyaṃ*, yet others add the planets (*graha*) and asterisms (*nakṣatra*), see Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 41–42 (line 5): *ācandrārkkagrahanakṣatratārakākālīnam*. This last case, belonging to the Valkhā king Rudradāsa and dated year 68 (CE 387–88) is a subtle yet concrete indication of the expanding patronage of astronomical knowledge in early Gupta circles. A seventh-century example with *graha* and *nakṣatra* is R. R. Halder, "Dabok Inscription of the Time of Dhavalappadeva; [Harsha] Samvat 207," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 124 (line 3); the correct date for this record is *saṃvat* 701, see D. C. Sircar, "Epigraphic Notes," *EI* 35 (1963–64): 100.
195. M. G. Dikshit, "Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 24," *EI* 31 (1955–56): 265–66. The dynastic context of these plates is explained in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 29. In some plates of Bhāskarvarman, the originals are recorded as lost and new plates re-issued, Padmanatha Bhattacharya, "Two Lost Plates of the Nidhanpur Copper-Plates of Bhaskaravarman," *EI* 19 (1927–28): 115–25 (lines 7–10).

196. Copper-plate of *mahārāja* Hastin dated Gupta year 191 (CE 510–11), Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 108 (line 10). Also Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122 (line 8): *devāgrāhāro* [*]*tisṛṣṭaḥ*. The verb $\sqrt{srj}$ is often used in the charters to mean "bestowed" or "granted" but has a rich meaning and is used to denote a process of "creating" or "surging forth."
197. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348 (line 10): *apradādharmmeṇa tāmrapaṭṭīkṛtya*. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 363, translate *apradādharmmeṇa* as "law of irrevocable endowment," which papers over the difficulties. The meaning of the word *apradā* is discussed in note 57 in this chapter.
198. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 355–59 (line 5 and 17): *akṣayanīvyās* [read: *-yā*] *tāmrapaṭṭena*. Further commentary in Schopen, "Doing Business for the Lord: Lending on Interest and Written Loan Contracts in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya," *JAOS* 114 (1994): 527–54.
199. Amarasiṃha (2: 9: 80): *nīvī prapaṇo mūladhanam*.
200. For the earliest dated example, Mathurā inscription of Huviṣka of year 28, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 152 (line 3): *vakanapatinā akṣayanīvi dinna*.
201. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (lines 12–13): *putrapautrānvayopabhojyau pratipāditau*.
202. Richard M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," in *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi, 2000): 94–132. We hasten to add that the practice of temple destruction was not unique to the Sultanate. Aside from the carrying away of idols as noted in Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, pre-Islamic dynasts are known to have destroyed temples; for example the Rāṣṭrakūṭas desecrated the Sun temple of the Pratīhāras, see my *Temples of Gopakṣetra*, 96; for a Gupta-period example, see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 306, n. 2; discussed in Salomon, "New Inscriptional Evidence," 20. The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* records that the kings of Kashmir broke up temples and temple-estates to fund their military exploits. Motivations were thus political (destroying the deity that served as a palladium of a royal house) and economic (seizing property belonging to the god). The destruction of temples was not "religious" in the modern sense. The attempt to describe the phenomena with this anachronistic terminology is neither helpful nor historically correct: religion was a constituent of social, economic, and political identity.
203. Illustrations in Dass, and Willis "Lion Capital," Figure 14.
204. See my *Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra*, 22.
205. Detailed account in Rösel, "Land Endowment and Sacred Food."
206. The construction of a pair of temples and store-rooms is recorded, but we side-step the added complexities: Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 338 (line 8): *devakuladvayam etat koṣṭhikādvayañ ca kārayitum icchāmy*.
207. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348 (lines 8–9): *atrāraṇye bhagavataḥ śvetavarāhasvāmino devakule kaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃskārakaraṇāya*.
208. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 114 (line 13) and p. 131. The texts have been given in Section 2.3. Note that a subsequent plate connected with this goddess records the building of the temple by Kumārasvāmin (ibid., 137 [lines 11–12]). As noted previously, this probably represents a rebuilding necessitated by the relocation of the image, perhaps because Choḍugomika died without issue.
209. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 355–59. In this copper-plate *bali*, *caru*, and *sattra* are missing, as is any mention of priests (ibid. [lines 7–8]): *bhagavato govindasvāmino devakule* [*kha*]*ṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃsk*[*ā**]*rakaraṇāya gandhadhūpadīpasumanasā*[*ṃ**] *pravarttanāya*. Have the Vedic offerings been left out because there was no brāhmaṇa available to perform them?
210. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 160; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 422 (lines 7–8): *varāhamūrtter jagatparāyaṇasya nārāyaṇasya śilāprās*[*ādaḥ*] *svaviṣay*[*e*] *airikiṇe kāritaḥ*.

211. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 76; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 404 (lines 30–31): *viṣṇo[ḥ] sthānam akārayad bhagava[taś śrī]mān mayūrākṣakaḥ.*
212. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 83; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 305 (line 16): *śre[ṇibhūtair] bbhavanam atulaṃ kāritaṃ.*
213. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 162; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 425–26 (lines 5–6): *mātṛceṭaḥ . . . karitavān śailamayaṃ bhānoḥ prāsādavaramukhyam.*
214. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 276 (lines 9–11): *laṅkādvīpapras taḥ . . . san mahānāmanāmā tenoccair bbodhimaṇḍe śaśikaradhavalaḥ sarvvato maṇḍapena kāntaḥ prāsāda eṣa smarabalajayinaḥ kārito lokaśāstuḥ.* For the date and relationship of this inscription to the Mahābodhi, see *The Dictionary of Art*, 15: 281.
215. Gonda, "Pratiṣṭhā," in *Selected Studies* 2: 338–74, esp. 371–72. In passing, we note that the references given in Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 1: 112, represent a random and ahistorical assortment of little value.
216. Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, passim.
217. *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, edited by R. Shama Sastri, *Viṣṇupratiṣṭhākalpaḥ* (2: 13: 17) and P. N. U. Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, 2 (lines 12–15): *homānta ud u tyaṃ jātavedasam ity utthāpya śākunena sūktena devālayaṃ praveśya maṇimuktāpravāḷasuvarṇarajatāni pādapīṭhe nidhāya devā avantu na iti viṣṇuṃ sthāpayet;* translation, ibid., 30.
218. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (4.10): *ṣaḍaṅgulād ahīnaṃ tad rūpaṃ kalpayitvā pūrvapakṣe punye nakṣatre pratiṣṭhāṃ kuryāt.* Also in Harting, *Selections*, 61.
219. *A Catalogue of the Indian Idols, Indian Paintings, Drawings, &c. which were collected by Mr. Simpson during a long residence in India, in the Company's Service which will be Sold by Auction by Mr. Christie* (London, 26 May 1792): lot 16. David Simpson was in Trichinopoly from 1780 and returned home in 1786; see D. G. Crawford, *Roll of the Indian Medical Service* (Calcutta, 1930): 265, for which reference I am grateful to Jerry Losty.
220. *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, edited by R. Shama Sastri, *Mahāpuruṣasyāharahaḥ paricaryāvidhiḥ* (2: 14: 1–12), and Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, 4–5. Note especially the conclusion: "In temples with images (of Mahāpuruṣa) the entire (ritual) is the same, except for the invocation and the dismissal (which are in this case not needed)."
221. Illustrated in T. Richard Blurton, *Bengal Myths* (London, 2006): 33, British Museum accession number 1845. 11–5. 1 acquired from John Doubleday, an employee of the Museum 1836–56.
222. Halder, "Sohawal Copper-Plate," 129 (lines 13–15): *svapuṇyābhivṛddhaye svapratiṣṭhāpitakabhagavat svāmikārttikeyasvāmipādānāṃ . . . cātisṛṣṭaḥ.*
223. The location of Kapitthaka is given on the plates of Govinda IV cited in note 98 in this chapter. For Varāhamihira's "obtaining the highest gift from the Sun at Kapitthaka," mentioned in Utpala's commentaries, see Bhāu Dājī, "Brief Notes," 406 note. By a curious and fortunate chance I owe this discovery to J. F. Fleet whose personal copy of *EI* 7 I happened to consult and in which there is a notation in his hand. The location is discussed without reference to the epigraphic material in Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Varāhamihira's India*, 2 vols. (Delhi, 1996) 1: 13. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscription thus provides a solution to the location and the variant spellings in *Bṛhajjātaka* manuscripts.
224. This refers to *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 42: 30–38; Varāhamihira nonetheless adds a further prognostic. This verse confirms that burnt oblations were offered at fifth-century temples, see discussion of *caru* previously.

225. The *sthāpaka* is the ritual specialist responsible for setting up the image, also found playing an important role in the *Kāśyapasaṃhitā*, a text to which we will return shortly.
226. We have altered the order of persons for the sake of translation: the *sthapati* is given last because he was a śūdra, see *Viṣṇusmṛti* (2: 14): *śūdrasya sarvaśilpāni*, discussed later. This verse summarises the spiritual benefits that accrue to the person who patronises the building of a temple, outcomes described in other sources in more detail, for which see Section 2.10.
227. Excepting vv. 20–21, which represents an astronomical digression, this is the concluding statement, so the subject refers back to learned men (*budha*) mentioned in v. 1.
228. For this portion, which leaves little doubt that Varāhamihira was a *daivajña*, I have following the understanding of H. Kern, "The Bṛhat-Saṇhitâ; or, Complete System of Natural Astrology of Varâha-mihira," *JRAS* 6 (1873): 335.
229. R. G. Bhandarkar, "Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II: G.E. 61," *EI* 21 (1931–32): 1–9; V. S. Agrawala, "Catalogue of the Mathurā Museum," *JUPHS* 23 (1950): 141–43; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1: 277–79; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981), 240; S. R. Goyal, *Guptakālīna abhilekh* (Jodhpur, 1993): 100; V. S. Agrawala, *Gupta Art*, 104, illustration 7.
230. Hans T. Bakker, "Somaśarman, Somavaṃśa and Somasiddhānta: a Pāśupata Tradition in Seventh-century Dakṣiṇa Kosala. Studies in the Skanda Purāṇa III," in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on this Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Ryutaro Tsuchida and Albrecht Wezler (Reinbek, 2000): 1–19.
231. The suggestion *samādhau* is that of P. R. Srinivasan, "Mathurā Pillar Inscription of the Gupta Year 61," *JAIH* 3 (1969–70): 113–22. He rejected Bhandarkar's proposal that the reading might be *gurupratimāyutau* as has Hans Bakker, see "Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Forms of Śiva Worship," in *Les sources et le temps / Sources and Time: A Colloquium, Pondichéry 11–13 January 1997*, edited by François Grimal (Pondichéry, 2001): 397–412. The verb *pratiṣṭhāpito* is corrected to *-pitau* to agree, but a similar lack of agreement is seen in the inscribed jamb from Mathurā recording the establishment of a gate and railing, Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 155 (lines 8–9): *toraṇaṃ ve[dikā ca prati*]ṣṭhāpito*. This is likely a coincidental mistake rather than a long-standing epigraphic usage.
232. The definitive study is Gonda, *The Meaning of the Sanskrit Term Āyatana*.
233. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1: 278, suggests: *pratigrahaḥ iti*.
234. Ibid., suggests: *kuryuḥ iti*.
235. Here Bhandarkar, et al., CII 3 (1981):240 wants to add *ucchindyāt*; Srinivasan, "Mathurā Pillar Insription," 120, *kuryāt* which is preferable. Compare coeval Mandārgiri cave inscription, Sircar, "Inscriptions from Mandar Hill," *EI* 36 (1965–66): 305 (lines 7–8): *va[r]e kaścid ya[ś] chedaṃ kurryāt sa pañcamahāpātakasakto n[n]i* (read: *ni*)*rayagāmī syād iti*.
236. Some comments on the text, translation and commentaries: (1) *māheśvarāḥ*: lay followers of Śiva like those mentioned in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* in the passage cited earlier (2) *viśaṅkam* construed here with *kuryyād*, "perform . . . without hesitation," a bracketing device common in Sanskrit syntax; (3) *yathā kālena* means "for all time"; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 278, n. 7, points out that Bhandarkar has misunderstood the text yet his *yathā kālaṃ* "in proper time" for *yathā kālena* seems unwarranted; the matter is discussed again in Srinivasan, "Mathurā Pillar Inscription," p. 119, but his "in the course of time" makes no sense; (4) *ācāryāṇāṃ*: Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 278, n. 7, raises the question *"ācāryāṇāṃ = gurūnām?"*

probably because of *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 2: 140–42, but *guru* and *ācārya* are made synonyms in the commentary on the *Gaṇakārikā*, a Pāśupata text and so applicable, see Hans T. Bakker, "At the Right Side of the Teacher: Imagination, Imagery and Image in Vedic and Śaiva Initiation," in *Images in Asian Religions*, 125; see also Section 3.6; (5) *jayati* etc.: this half-verse in *āryā* metre is discussed in Diwakar Acharya, "The Role of Caṇḍa in the Early History of the Pāśupata Cult and the Image on the Mathurā Pillar Dated Gupta Year 61," *IIJ* 48 (2005): 207–22, whose reading and iconographic identification for the moment supersedes earlier interpretations; (6) *kīrti*: the primary sense of this word is "fame" or "glory" but in epigraphic usage it can refer to a temple or other monument because such things are fame-producing works, see Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v.; additional commentary in V. S. Agrawala, "Kīrti, Kīrtimukha and Kīrtistambha," *Vāk* 5 (1957): 147–51; Agrawala, "The Pañchvaktra or Kīrtimukha Motif," *Purāṇa* 2 (1960): 97–106 and B. C. Chhabra, "Kirti: Its Connotation," in *Siddha-Bharati*, edited by Vishva Bandhu, 2 vols. (Hoshiarpur, 1950) 1: 38–42; the fame in this case devolved on Uditācārya, the Pāśupata preceptor who built the *gurvāyatana* and instigated the inscription – indeed, the inscription plainly states that the work was undertaken for the sake of fame and as a sign of Uditācārya's respect for his *guru*-s: Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1: 278 (lines 8–9) [*sva**]*pu*[*ṇyā*]*pyāyananimittaṃ gurūṇāṃ ca kīrtyā*[*rtham*]. The term *kīrti* does not otherwise provide information about the appearance or function of the monument. Further instances are in *Skandapurāṇa*, edited by Hans T. Bakker and H. Issacson (Groningen, 2005) IIA: 61, 77.

237. The inscription does not provide a descriptive term and evidence for *liṅga* worship otherwise is scanty, see Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 71–75. In Bakker, "Reconstructing Ancient Forms of Śiva Worship," 401, the view is expressed that Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara were iconic images and not *liṅga*-s. Bakker takes this position because he seeks to identify the Pravareśvara of Vākāṭaka inscriptions with an image from Mansar now in the National Museum of India. But *liṅga*-worship is now known to have been widespread in the Gupta period, for which Bakker, "Religion and Politics in the Eastern Vākāṭaka Kingdom," *SAS* 18 (2002): 1–24, so Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara were almost certainly *liṅga*-s.
238. On early Brāhmanical practices, Caland, *Die altindischen Todten- und Bestattungsgebräuche. Mit Benutzung handschriftelicher Quellen* (Amsterdam, 1896) more recently Joachim Freidrich Sprockhoff, "Zum Altindischen Totenritual," *IIJ* 46 (2003): 23–41 and on later material, see Bakker "Monuments to the Dead in Ancient North India," *IIJ* 50 (2007): 11–47, a manuscript copy of which the author kindly provided for study. Some discussion of memorials also in D. R. Das, "Archaeological Evidence on Cremation and Post-cremation Burial In India," *JAIH* 3 (1969–70): 50–71. Note also Srinivasan, "Mathurā Pillar Inscription," 118–19: "even today the practice of installing a Śiva-*liṅga* on the grave of a dead ascetic is widely in vogue."
239. N. G. Majumdar, "Kosam Inscription of the Reign of Maharaja Vaisravana of the year 107," *EI* 24 (1937–38): 147–48 (lines 10–12): *pūrvvasiddhāyatane . . . saṃbuddhasya*. Sircar, "Davangere Plates of Ravivarman, Year 34," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 91 (line 16): *siddhāyatanapūjārthaṃ saṃghasya parivṛddhaye*. Śaiva adepts are also termed *siddha*. In *AŚ* (5: 2: 39) mention is made of a *siddhapuṇyasthāna*, evidently a similar sort of place.
240. Personal communication with Hans T. Bakker, April 2005. Apte, *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Poona, 1959) 2: 973 s.v. *parigraha*.
241. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 341 (lines 5–6) with emendations: *mahāyānikāvaivarttikabhikṣusa*[*ṅ**]*ghānām parigrahe bhagavato buddhasya satataṃ triṣkālaṃ*

*gandhapuṣpadīpadhūpādipra[varttanāya*]. There is a long historiography of the "Vaivarttika monastic order" based on the faulty reading of this record but as noted by Louis de La Vallée Poussin in *Bibliographie bouddhique* 1 (1930): 79: "le terme *vaivarttika* ne soit jamais usité dans la philosophie bouddhique car il faut lire *avaivartika*." Although the copper-plate could refer to an "Avaivarta monastic order," an adjectival use of the word is more likely, the description referring to monks who have taken Bodhisattva vows, the last and eleventh of which is characterised in the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* (a text translated into Chinese in CE 419) as *avaivartika*, "non-regressive," "irreversible." The monks in question have thus reached the stage (*bhūmi*) in which they no longer accumulate defilements or regress to mundane levels of existence. The reading *avaivarttika* was also suggested, but without commentary, in Schopen, "The Buddha as an Owner of Property and Permanent Resident in Medieval Monasteries," *JIP* 18 (1990): 185.

242. *Pratiṣṭhāmayūkha* (Bombay, 1862): 30b7: *atha kartṛnāmayutaṃ devanāma kuryāt sarvadā vyavahārārtham*. Cited with further instructive examples in Sanderson, "The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers, Part 1," *BEFEO* 91–92 (2003–04): 415, n. 250. Reference to the practice of naming of gods using the suffixes *–īśvara* and *–svāmin* is also found in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, the relevant passage mentioned in Sircar, "Inscriptions from Mandar Hill," 305, n. 1. I am compelled to note Bhandarkar et al, CII 3 (1981): 281, where the author states: "The practice of naming gods or their temples in this manner is too common to require much elucidation." With this ill-considered remark, the very possibility of religious history is dismissed summarily.
243. *Somaśambhupaddhati* (4: 227, v. 46): *hiraṇyapaśubhūmyādi gītavādyādihetave | amukeśāya tad bhaktyā śaktyā sarvaṃ nivedayet*. Cited Sanderson, "The Śaiva Religion," 416, n. 250.
244. The wider religious circle, beyond initiated ascetics, is briefly discussed in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 69. As he rightly notes: "The duties and rewards of these laymen are described in the *Śivadharma*, a corpus of texts that, for the greater part, still awaits edition and exploration."
245. Richard Davis, "Cremation and Liberation: The Revision of a Hindu Ritual," *History of Religions* 28 (1988): 37–53; more generally Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton, 1991): 109–11. I am not proposing that the doctrines of mature Śaiva Siddhānta and Pāśupata are the same, only that features are shared. The problem is that much regarding the history of Śaivism is either lost or awaits detailed exploration and publication, see note 244 in this chapter.
246. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 289 (lines 6–7) *kapāleśvare jananīpratiṣṭhitasya śrīmihireśvarasya kapāleśvarabalicarusattrasragdhūpadīpadānāya satataṃ*. The location of Nermand is shown in my *Temples of Gopakṣetra*, Map 5 (number 7). Fleet dated the record on paleographic grounds to the seventh century. The *mahārāja* Śarvavarman mentioned in line 9 is probably the Maukhari ruler of the same name so the record may be dated to the third quarter of the sixth century; the literature regarding the possible date is summarised in K. K. Thaplyal, *Inscriptions of the Maukharis, Later Guptas, Puṣpabhutis and Yaśovarman of Kanauj* (Delhi, 1985): 29. The overall chronology is taken up in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50. The term *nihilapati* at the end of this plate is explained in Sircar, "Indological Notes: 5. Nihilapati = Nihelapati," *JAIH* 3 (1969–70): 137–41.
247. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 289 (lines 6–7): *janamīśrīmihiralakṣmyāḥ . . . jananīpratiṣṭhitasya śrīmihireśvarasya*.
248. Ibid., 289 (lines 5–6): *paramamāheśvaro [*]tibrahamaṇyaḥ parārtthy(rtth)aikarato . . . bhagavatas tripurāntakasya lokālokakarasya praṇatānukampinas sarvvaduḥkhakṣayakaro* (read: *karasya*).

249. The mythology is summarised in Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 157.
250. Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 83, on which I have drawn for the explanation given here. The idea the perfected soul – the *siddha* – was identical to but not the same as god is also an important dogma in the Pāśupata belief system and is a subject of Kauṇḍinya's commentary. Personal communication with Hans T. Bakker, April 2005.
251. The oldest *sahasraliṅga* I have seen is located at Sondni (near Mandasaur) where there are sixth-century inscriptions of Yaśodharman.
252. See my *Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra*, 116: *śrī krakoṭakeśvar*[*ra*]*deva*; *śrī bhītupre*[read: *prā*]*ṇe*[*śvaradeva*]. I would prefer now to date these records to the circa tenth century on paleographic grounds. For clusters of Śiva temples at Batesar and Naresar, see illustrations in my *Temples of Gopakṣetra* (e.g., Figure 60).
253. Kielhorn, "Rajor Inscription of Mathanadeva; [Vikrama-] Samvat 1016," *EI* 3 (1894–95): 266 (lines 8–9): *svamātṛśrīlacchukā nām*[*n*]*ā śrīlacchukeśvaramahādevāya*.
254. H. V. Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the Paramāras, Chandellas, Kachchapaghātas and Two Minor Dynasties*, CII 7, number 19; for the architecture Krishna Deva, "Bhūmija Temples," in *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* (Poona, 1975): 90–113. An issue raised by eponymous naming that merits separate study is the possibility that a temple established by an important king could lay the foundation for a dynastic power centre, the granting of land being a means by which the dynasty could retain an unbreakable hold on their estates via departed ancestors who stood in proximity to the godhead as autonomous theomorphic entities.
255. Hultzsch, *South Indian Inscriptions*, Archaeological Survey of India, 24 vols., 1890–1983 (Madras, 1890) 1:30 (lines 1–2). Further commentary in Michael Lockwood, "The Philosophy of Mahendra's Tiruchi Inscription," in *Māmallapuram and the Pallavas* (Madras, 1982): 62–73. The reading is debated and the multiple meanings much argued, but it is clear that the king sought to make himself "fixed" (i.e., eternally renowned via the image). A second inscription in the cave proves the point: by carving a stone representation, the king makes an eternal living form for himself (*mūrttiḥ kīrttimayī cāsya kṛtā tenaiva śāśvatī*, Hultzsch, *South Indian Inscriptions*, 30, lines 12–13). My understanding of the post-mortem perpetuation of personal identity and *kīrti* in these inscriptions is informed by the iron-pillar inscription, the full text of which is given below in Section 3.7.
256. See my *Temples of Gopakṣetra*, 90 and *Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra*, 1–2. Prakrit grammarians teach that the suffix *-illa* stands in the sense of *-mat* and *–vat*; *vāilla* may thus be a colloquialism for *vāmana*.
257. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 16 and 19; Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekar Gupta, "Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, Year 5," *ABORI* 1997 (78): 155 (line 2): *devadevasya moṇḍasvāminas sandeśāt*.
258. Teun Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom* (*Kāśyapa-jñānakāṇḍaḥ*): *A Ritual Handbook of the Vaikhānasas*, Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae X (The Hague, 1965): 76–78. For the position of this text in the Vaikhānasa tradition, see Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 2, fasc. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1977): 143–46. The text may be as early as 800 according to Goudriaan and Gonda. The text is not homogeneous, and the detailed digressions that disrupt the sequence of ritual acts suggest that most basic parts rest on old sources, probably of the immediate post-Gupta period.
259. *Kāśyapajñānakāṇḍaḥ* (*Kāśyapasaṃhitā*), edited by R. Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya, Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvara Oriental Series, no. 12 (Tirupati, 1948): 30 (Chapter 20). The point about the highest benefit accruing after death is also made in the opening of the

chapter of this work. With slight modification, I use here the translation of Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, 77–78. The consecration mentioned is detailed in *Kāśyapa*, Chapters 59–68.

260. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (10: 10): *abhīṣṭāṃ parāṃ jatiṃ sa gatvā viṣṇor loke mahīyate.* The path of ascetics and yogins is more advanced: ibid., *praśna* 8.
261. Briefly noted in Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, 171; the questions he raises on p. 198 can be addressed through epigraphic and archaeological material. Compare also the Proasat Pram Loven stone inscription of Guṇavarman, dateable to the fifth century: *sa paramaṅ gacchet padaṃ vaiṣṇavam*, G. Coedès, "Études cambodgiennes: XXV – Deux inscriptions sanskrites du Fou-nan," *BEFEO* 31 (1931): 6 (line 19); also given in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 512. Pollock, "Sanskrit Cosmopolis," p. 219, has queried the dating, but his discussion is not substantive.
262. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 354.
263. Sten Konow, "Karamdanda Inscription of the Reign of Kumaragupta [Gupta-] Samvat 117," *EI* 10 (1909–10): 70–2; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 281–82; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 289–90. Bhandarkar's reading is inaccurate and his emendations to Konow singularly regressive. Sircar is better, but some of his reconstructions are not supported by the estampage. Base on the published estampage, I read lines 7–10 as follows (with reconstructed portion in square brackets): *pṛthivīṣeṇo mahārājādhirājaśrīkumāraguptasya mantrikumārāmatyonantaraṃ ca mahābalādhikṛtaḥ bhagavato mahādevasya pṛthivīśvara ity evaṃ samākhyātasyasyaiva* [*sic*] *bhagavato yathā karttavya dhārmmikakarmmaṇā pādaśuśr ṣaṇāya bhagavacchaileśvarasvāmimahādevapādamūle āyodhyakanānāgottracaraṇatapaḥ s*[*v*]*ādh*[*y*]*āyamant*[*ra*] *s*[*ū*]*t*[*tra*]*bhāṣ*[*ya*]*p*[*ra*]*vacanapāraga bhā*[*raḍ*]*idasa*[*ma*]*dadevadroṇyāṃ . . .* [**praṭiṣṭhaḥ*?]. Despite difficulties toward the end, an apparent hierarchy of Śivas – Śaileśvarasvāmimahādeva and Pṛthivīśvara – confirms our understanding of the Nermand copper-plate where we have Mihireśvara and Kapāleśvara. The procession of the god (*devadroṇi*), so well known in the south, appears only in this Gupta record, but it is mentioned again in a plate of the sixth century, confirming the northern origin of the practice, see Y. R. Gupte, "Two Talesvara Copper Plates," *EI* 13 (1915–16): 115 (line 6): *devadroṇyadhikṛtamahāsattrapatittrātaikākisvāminā.*
264. Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 25–26 (line 3). The god's name Bappapiśācadeva may, as the editors noted, refer to a deceased person.
265. In the upper Indus petroglyphs, there are Buddhist examples of devotees offering incense in which the details are more clearly preserved. These are dateable on paleographic and iconographic grounds to the fifth or sixth century. Ditte Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan I: Kataloge Chilas-Brücke und Thalpan (Steine1–30)*, Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans, Band 6 (Mainz: 2003): 83, no. 64:18, taf. 1, XIa, XIIc and ibid., pp. 75–6, nos. 63:1–3, taf. 1, 44 and IXa.
266. Frequently illustrated, for example in Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Figure 9.
267. Numerous instances could be cited, (e.g., the rectangular shrine at Batesar); see my "A Brick Temple of the Ninth Century," *Artibus Asiae* 52 (1992): Plate 10. The image of the Mothers once inside this shrine is pictured in my *Temples of Gopakṣetra*, Figure 82. More well-known is the Vaitāl Deul in Orissa, *EITA: North India Period of Early Maturity*, Figure 886. Instances of the mother-goddesses with Gaṇeśa are catalogued in Paul Martin-Dubost, *Gaṇeśa* (Mumbai, 1997): 273ff, to which should be added the fifth-century rock-cut panel at Rāmgarh near Badoh.
268. Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, 327 and Figures 15.4–15.8. Also see Paul B. Courtright, *Gaṇeśa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford, 1985), especially 160ff.

269. Harle, *Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (New Haven, 1994): Figure 233; Huntington, *Art of Ancient India* (Boston, 1985): Figure 21.4. For in situ Gaṇeśa figures, Martin-Dubost, *Gaṇeśa*, 136 (Rājasthān) and 235 (Andhra Pradesh); also my *Temples of Gopakṣetra*, Figure 3, 26, 47.
270. Cunningham, "14. Udaygiri or Udaygiri," 50, Plate XIX, Number 3; Gwalior State, *Archaeological Report* (VS 1988/AD 1931–32): number 5; H. N. Dvivedī, *Gvāliyar rājya ke abhilekh* (Banaras, VS 2004): number 714. I read the inscription as: *sulikhita*[*ṃ] *si* (read: *śi*)*vādityena*. The iconography of the exterior niches makes a Śaiva dedication unproblematic and accordingly I dismiss the proposals in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 41, n. 64.
271. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 250–51; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 281 (line 9). Translation and commentary in Schopen, "Doing Business for the Lord."
272. Gonda, "Pratiṣṭhā," p. 371. Here Gonda seems influenced by Śabara, for which Section 3.5.
273. Prannāth Saraswati, *The Hindu Law of Endowments*, Tagore Law Lectures 1892 (Calcutta, 1897): 114, rightly notes that the term *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* is absent in *Varāhamihira* and is only able to cite the late medieval *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* for it. In this text, *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* comes between bathing the image and the performance of the *homa*. Other accounts – of very little value – can be found in J. N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford, 1913): 335 and 322, citing a later Tantra; L. S. S. O'Malley, *Popular Hinduism* (Cambridge, 1935): 26–27 citing Ram Mohan Roy and the testimony of G. U. Pope. Jean Herbert, *Spiritualité Hindoue* (Paris, 1947): 324 simply lists the main features: "Et finalement on prend congé d'elle (visarjana) comme on l'avait tout d'abord 'invitée à être présente' (âvâhana) et à 'animer' l'image (prâna-pratishthā)."
274. In the archaeological literature inaccurately written as Bhitari; here the spelling follows the pronunciation of the people who live there, Survey of India maps, and Corpus Topographicum Indiae Antiquae (Part I, Epigraphical Find Spots) by R. Stroobandt (Gent, 1974). The pillar is illustrated in Burgess, *Ancient Monuments, Temples and Sculptures of India*, Plate 218; also Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Figure 142.
275. Based on an examination of the inscription in situ together with the hand-copy in Cunningham, " 14. Udaygiri or Udaygiri," and the estampages and readings given in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 54; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 314; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 324, and S. R. Goyal, *Guptakālīna abhilekh*, 209.
276. Bhandarkar et al, CII 3 (1981) want to read: *muktibhir yuktā*.
277. Bhandarkar et al., *CII* (1981): 315 offers *prakāryyā*.
278. Ibid., 315, n. 4 suggests the restoration *kumārasvāmināmikām*, which we accept for reasons taken up later. Fleet (and Sircar and Goyal following him) reconstructed the missing words as *yāvad ācandratārakam*.
279. The reading of this word differs from earlier editions; justification for it is taken up later.
280. The meaning of this term is taken up later.
281. The identity of Śārṅgin is addressed in the closing part of Section 3.6.
282. Hans T. Bakker, "A Note on Skandagupta's Bhitarī Inscription, vv. 8–12," in *Revealing India's Past*, edited by R. K. Sharma and Devendra Handa (New Delhi, 2004): 248–51. I am grateful, as ever, to the author for candidly sharing his views and also for providing a prepublication copy of this article.
283. Fleet CII 3 (1888): 141; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 283–84. We return to this in Section 3.6 where the text is given in full.
284. Ibid., 267 (lines 29–30).

285. See above note 236 in this chapter.
286. Vidula Jayaswal, *Royal Temples of the Gupta Period (Excavations at Bhitari)* (Delhi, 2001): 48–80.
287. A. Cunningham, "Bhitari," *ASIR* 1 (1862–65): Plate XXX.
288. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 56.
289. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 317.
290. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 where the minister Vīrasena recounts his visit "here," (i.e., Udayagiri), with Candragupta: *rājñaiveha sahāgataḥ*. Also, in the Dāmodarpur plate, *iha viṣaye*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348 (lines 6) discussed earlier.
291. For the ancient view of the *grāma*, see Malamoud, "Village and Forest in the Ideology of Brahmanic India," 75.
292. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 54.
293. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 317.
294. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 324, n. 3
295. Cunningham, "Bhitari" Plate XXX. Our reading agrees with that in Cunningham's hand copy, which has defects otherwise. Cunningham reported the inscription to have already decayed since he first saw it in January 1836 (ibid., 98), but I am inclined to view his emphasis on the great care with which his copy was made as a characteristic attempt to maintain the authority of his own work.
296. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 67 (lines 9–12); Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 317; Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, 274–5. A number of translations have been offered for this inscription, most recently Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, 275. The technical words are taken up in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 66, and Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 308.
297. Madra's comments about the transitory nature of the world are not unique, see the Mandasaur Inscription of Naravarman, Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 261–66, where the donor "regards this world of living beings to be as unsteady as the water of a mirage or a dream or lightning or the flame of a lamp"; the same sentiments again in the slightly later Nagar Inscription of Dhanika, Shaktidhar Sharma Guleri, "The Nagar Inscription of Dhanika [Vikrama-] Samvat 741," in *Bhārata Kaumudī* 1: 282 (v. 26): "(Thinking) that the life of mankind is as unstable as a hundred drops of water (resting) on the tips of grass, that this youth of men is as frivolous as the leaves of the tremulous infantine reeds; that prosperity is as transitory as the splendour of light in the rays of the autumnal moon – wise men have regard for fame." Accordingly the assessment in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 97, can be set aside.
298. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 54; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1: 323 (lines 14–15): *pracalitaṃ vaṅśaṃ pratiṣṭhāpya . . . pratidinaṃ saṃvarddhamānadyutir gītaiś ca stutibhiś ca vandakajano* |?| *yaṃ* |*prā*|*payaty āryyatām*. The presence of bards at court to sing the king's panegyrics and those of his forefathers was well established, Bhagwat Saran Upadhyaya, *India in Kālidāsa*, 77 citing *Raghuvaṃśa* (4: 6; 5: 65) and *Vikramorvaśī* (4: 13). For the propagation of the king's reputation in song we might return to the epigraphic side and the slightly later Nagar Inscription of Dhanika: "May the king's glory which is as lustrous as the moon be sung by the people as long as mount Meru stands etc.," see Guleri, "Nagar Inscription of Dhanika," in *Bhārata Kaumudī*, 2: 275 (v. 28): *kīrttir iyaṃ śaśāṅkarucirā rājño janair ggīyatāṃ* etc.
299. As we find in the iron-pillar inscription, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 141: *tenāyaṃ . . . bhagavato viṣṇor dhvajaḥ sthāpitaḥ*, i.e. "by him [king Candra] . . . this standard of lord Viṣṇu was established."
300. Bakker, "Commemorating the Dead."

301. The two terms are discussed in Malamoud, *Cooking the World*, 209; he renders *pratimā* as replica, portrait, or reflection and *mūrti* as corporeal form enclosed or frozen within a set limit. Further implications are explored in Section 3.6.
302. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*: 1: 286 (lines 7–9) *bhagavatas trailokyatejassaṃbhārasaṃbhūtādbhutamūrtter brahmaṇyadevasya . . . nivāsinaḥ svāmimahāsenasyāyatane ['*]smin kārttayugācārasaddharmmavartmānuyāyinā [mātā][pitror ātmanaś ca puṇyātthaṃ sādhu*][pa]riṣadā mānitena dhruvaśarmmaṇā karmma mahatkṛtedam* (read: *kṛtam idam*).
303. Prannath Saraswati, *Hindu Law of Endowments*, 116. A more contemporary view in Derrett, "Religious Endowments, Public and Private," 482–512.
304. Gwalior stone inscription, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 426 (line 6): *śailamayaṃ bhānoḥ prāsādavaramukhyam*; Eran stone image inscription, ibid., 422 (line 7): *nārāyaṇasya śilāprāsādaḥ*; Kahāum pillar, ibid., 317 (line 12): *śailastambhaḥ*.
305. The issue of Vedic authority is explored in Smith, *Reflections*, pp. 20–29.
306. Bruce M. Sullivan, *Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and the Mahābhārata: A New Interpretation* (Leiden, 1990).
307. James L. Fitzgerald, "India's Fifth Veda: the Mahābhārata's Presentation of Itself," in *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, pp. 150–70, where the author skilfully outlines how the epic justifies itself as a vision of the ultimate reality as the personal deity Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa, a Veda which was endorsed, possessed, and supported by brāhmaṇas, and a *śāstra* which supports royal action after the example of Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa.
308. The categories are usefully explored from the perspective of Mīmāṃsā in Sheldon Pollock, "The Revelation of Tradition: *śruti*, *smṛti*, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power," in *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, edited by Federico Squarcini (Firenze, 2005): 41–61.
309. van Buitenen, *Bhagavadgītā*, p. 9. Relevant discussion also in M. Biardeau, "Some Remarks on the Links between the Epics, the Purāṇas and their Vedic Sources," in *Studies in Hinduism: Vedism and Hinduism*, edited by G. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1997): 69–173.
310. Cited in van Buitenen, *Bhagavadgītā*, p. 10.
311. D. C. Bhattacharya, "A Newly Discovered Copperplate from Tippera: The Gunaighar Grant of Vainyagupta: The Year 188," *IHQ* 6 (1930): 54; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 342.
312. Read: *smṛte*.
313. The story of Sagara's horse and how the ocean – *sāgara* – was named after him is neatly summarised in Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 155, n. 2.
314. Examples cited in Sircar, "Epigraphic Notes, 9. Creation of Rent-free Holdings," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 50, n. 2. A good example is the Pāhārpur charter, K. N. Dikshit, "Paharpur Copper Plate Grant of the [Gupta] Year 159," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 59–64; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 359–63 (lines 16–17): *paramabhaṭṭārakapādānām arthopacayo dharmmaṣaḍbhāgāpyāyanañ ca bhavati*. Also Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 362 (lines 12–13): *śrīparamabhaṭṭārkapādānā[ṃ*] dharmma[phalaṣa*]ḍbhā[gā*] vāp[t]i[ḥ*]* from one of the Dāmodarpur plates.
315. Cited in Maity, *Economic Life*, 56.
316. Read: *dānāc chreyo ('*)nupālanam*.
317. Krishnamacharya, *Viṣṇusmṛti*; translation after Jolly, SBE, vol. 7: 21–22. The mention of copper-plates in *Yājñavalkya* 2: 319–20 is less informative as the text took its present form after the ninth century and is thus subsequent to the *VSm*, see J. D. M. Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra and Juridical Literature*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 4 (Wiesbaden, 1973): 34.

318. These agents are called *cāṭa*-s and *bhaṭa*-s for which see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 98, n. 2; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 391, n. 6; Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 845–46; Maity, *Economic Life*, 64. They were unsavoury characters as might be expected of revenue agents and bailiffs.
319. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (lines 12–13); for another example see ibid., 108 (lines 9–10): *putrapautrānvayopabhogya-*. In several cases, yet further generations are mentioned: *putra*[*pauttra**]*prapauttratatputtrādikkrameṇa*, ibid., 122 (line 9) and ibid., 131 (lines 10–11): *choḍugomikāya etat puttra* [*pautra**] *prapauttratatputtrādy anukkrameṇa tāṃbra-* (read: *tāmra*) *śāsanenātisṛṣṭaḥ*.
320. D. C. Sircar, "Davangere Plates of Ravivarman, Year 34," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 92 (line 24). These plates belong to the early Kadambas, showing the use of the verse in the sixth century. Also in F. Kielhorn, "Two Kadamba Grants. B. Bannahaḷḷi Plates of Kṛishṇavarman II," *EI* 6 (1900–01): 19 (line 25–26) where the expression is given to Manu.
321. Krishnamacharya, *Viṣṇusmṛti*; translation after Jolly, *Viṣṇusmṛti* (5: 185–87) in SBE, vol. 7: 40.
322. Jolly, SBE, vol. 7: xii and xxvii–xxxii.
323. As suggested by Jolly, SBE, vol. 7: 256. For textual references to the location, see Sanderson, "Religion and State," 282.
324. Jolly, SBE, vol. 7: xxxiii; Krishnamacharya, *Viṣṇusmṛti*, 1: xxiii; Nandapaṇḍita ad 85: 44 *viṣṇupadaṃ gayāmadhyasthitam*.
325. The research on the geographical distribution of schools based on epigraphic data and the origin of manuscripts is summarised in Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, pp. 336–37, but see further comments in Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*. When manuscripts were collected in the nineteenth century, the greatest proportion of Kāṭhakas and Kāṭhaka MSS came from Kashmir. But we cannot, on this basis, assume that Kashmir was the original or only stronghold of the Kāṭhakas, the migration of brāhmaṇas to different parts of India being a conspicuous feature of Indian history from the Gupta period. The position of the *Viṣṇusmṛti* has been reevaluated several times: see Renou, "Sur la forme de quelques textes sanskrits," *Journal asiatique* 249 (1961): 163–72; Gruenendahl, Reinhold in *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*, edited by Peter Schreiner (Wiesbaden, 1997): 235–36. Most recently, Olivelle has tackled the problem. He regards the *VSm* as a work of the sixth century or even later, see Olivelle, "Viṣṇu-Smṛti: Explorations in a Forgotten Dharmaśāstra," read at AOS: 250th Meeting, Philadelpha (19 March 2005), a copy of which was kindly provided by the author. The date of the Greek sequence of days makes the reworking later than Jolly proposed, see note 167 in this chapter. The iconic visualisation of Viṣṇu in *VSm* (97: 10) cannot be any earlier than the late fourth century. According to Derrett, Bhāruci, a seventh-century author in the south, may have produced a commentary on an early version of the *VSm*, see Derrett, *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1973): 1: 6–7.
326. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 103 (lines 11–2): *vāsulasagottr*[*ā**]*ya kaṭhasabrahmacāriṇe kumāradevāya*.
327. Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 326; Jolly, SBE, vol. 7: xiv, citing Patañjali, *Mahābhāṣya*.
328. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 144 (line 10): *varṇṇāśramadharmmasthāpanāniratena*, "intent on establishing the law of *varṇa* and life-stages" as a description of *mahārāja* Hastin (c. 475–82) which conforms to the king's duty as prescribed in *VSm* 3: 3. Again in *VSm* (84: 4) Āryāvarta is described as the country where the *varṇa*-system prevails; beyond that are barbarian lands. This draws attention because Gupta charters otherwise do not advocate the *varṇa*-system.

329. Contra Virkus, *Politische Strukturen im Guptareich*, who perceives the Gupta realm as essentially fragmented, as noted in the Introduction.
330. See Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 98, n. 5, for his listing of epigraphic occurrences and comments. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* 2: 1271–77, has collected forty-three verses on *bhūmidāna* and added some notes on their occurrences in texts; contra Kane (862) these are not necessarily their source as the texts are frequently later than the inscriptions. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, 171–201, gives a second collection, but Sircar's assessment that "all the stanzas specifically attributed to the *Mahābhārata* cannot be traced in texts of the present work"(173) is wrong and has prompted several incorrect conclusions.
331. For example, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 108 (lines 10–12) and in the plates of *mahārāja* Bhūta dated year 6, see Mehta and Thakur, *Copper Plates of the Time of Toramāṇa*, 15–16 (lines 10–12). Pravarasena records his maintenance of grants made by dead kings and urges those to come to respect his, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 247 (lines 35–38).
332. Sircar, *Political and Administrative Systems*, 1.
333. Bakker, "Throne and Temple," 90–92. This view also developed by Hermann Kulke; a comprehensive review of models, no doubt desirable, is reserved for a future historiographic study.
334. Bakker, "Throne and Temple," 92.
335. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 348 (lines 6–7, 10) and 1: 338 (line 11). The terminology is discussed in note 57 in this chapter.
336. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 292–94 (line 9–10): *[airā]vatā[go]rājye paściṇa-* (read: *paścima*) *diśi pañcadro[ṇāma]kāḥ* (read: °*tmakāḥ*) *ha[ṭṭa]pānakaiś ca*. The questionable reconstruction *araghaṭṭa* in Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 290 has crept into later interpretations; for example, O. v. Hinüber, *IIJ* 47 (2004): 319.
337. Usha Jain, "Katni Plates of Jayanatha, Year 182," *EI* 40 (1973–74): 95–100. The plates are reported to have been recovered at Uchahara, ancient Uccakalpa, in Satna district. The literature on caste is substantial, but theoretical orientation can be had from Brian K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe: the Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (Oxford, 1994). The validating mythology of caste has yet to be rigorously historicised. K. K. Thaplyal, *Village and Village Life in Ancient India: A Study of Village and Village Life in Northern India from 6th century BC to 1st century AD* (Delhi, 2004) makes a start but the indiscriminate use of literary sources, some of them later than the author's period, limits the usefulness of the work.
338. Other examples in addition to that just cited: Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 118 (line 6); ibid., 127 (lines 7–8); ibid., 131 (line 7).
339. The historiography of this issue is surveyed in Vishwa Mohan Jha, "Settlement, Society and Polity in Early Medieval Rural India," *Indian Historical Review* 20 (1993–94): 34–65.
340. *VSm* (2: 14): *śūdrasya sarvaśilpāni*. The *kāruka-s* mentioned in the grants were simple artisans, perhaps even menial labourers. There were also slaves serving temples: *devaśuśrūṣakadāsīdāsa-*, see copper-plate of *mahārāja* Bhūta, cited in Section 2.6 in full.
341. *VSm* (2: 13): *kṛṣigorakṣavāṇijyakusīdayonipoṣaṇāni vaiśyasya*. One requirement matches the Dāmodarpur charter of Kumāragupta where the assigned lands are *ago*, devoid of cattle, as noted earlier. As kindly pointed out to me by Dr. Vishwa Mohan Jha, the word *yonipoṣaṇa* does not mean "growing seeds" as Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* suggests, but "keeping a wife." This emphasises the importance of increasing the population on the new estate.
342. *VSm* (84: 3–4): *paranipāneṣv apaḥ pītvā tat sāmyam upagacchatīti* || 3 *cāturvarṇyavyavasthānaṃ yasmin deśe na vidyate | sa mlecchadeśo vijñeya āryāvartas tataḥ paraḥ* || 4.

343. See Section 2.7 and note 179 in this chapter.
344. Bakker, "Throne and Temple," 92.
345. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 126; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 390–93 (lines 17–18): *tai* (read: *te*) *yūyam eṣāṃ samucitabhāgabhogakarahiraṇyādi pratyāyopanaya[ṃ*] kariṣyathājñāśravaṇavidheyāś ca bhaviṣyatha.*
346. Sircar, *Political and Administrative Systems*, 31, and again Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, 114–15, based on the wording found in, for example, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 349 (lines 12–13).
347. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* (Calcutta, 1965); Sharma., *Urban Decay in India* (Calcutta, 1987). The historical theory of progressive transformation advanced by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya for the medieval is more in harmony with the explanation advanced here. See Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (Delhi, 1994). Intense debate about the nature of feudalism and the Indian medieval, a major feature of the historiography, is beyond the scope of the present book.
348. Accordingly, we do not have to join Om Prakash, *Early Indian Land Grants and State Economy* (Allahabad, 1948), who seeks to maintain the authority of the king and state by arguing that the charters do not mean what they say (i.e., they cannot be read literally because their authors were constrained by protocol). Although Om Prakash's views have not enjoyed currency, his point is taken: purchases are described in charters as "gifts" (as noted in Section 2.1) and grants are often recorded as being made by the king when a subordinate seems to have been the agent, see Sircar, "Epigraphic Notes, 9. Creation of Rent-free Holdings," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 50–52.
349. Julia Shaw and John Sutcliffe, "Ancient Dams and Buddhist Landscapes in the Sanchi Area: New Evidence on Irrigation, Land Use and Monasticism in Central India," *SAS* 21 (2005): 1–24.
350. For example, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 136 (line 16): *acāṭabhaṭaprāveśyau*. The king's men (i.e., *cāṭa*-s and *bhāṭa*-s), were discussed earlier in this chapter, see note 318.
351. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 137 (line 17): *rājābhāvyakarapratyāyā[ḥ*] sarvve na grāhyā[ḥ]*; ibid., 133 (line 1): *samucitarājābhāvyakarapratyāyāś caḥ* (read: *ca*) *na grāhyāḥ*; Halder, "Sohawal Copper-Plate," 129 (line 19): *samucitarājābhāvyakarapratyāyāś ca na grāhyāḥ*. Usha Jain, "Katni Plates of Jayanatha, Year 182," 95–100 (line 24): *samucitarājābhāvyakarapratyāyā[ś* ca] na grāhyā[ḥ*]*.
352. Derrett, "Bhū-bharaṇa, bhū-pālana, bhū-bhojana," *BSOAS* 22 (1959): 114. The eight normal entitlements were: *nidhi, nikṣepa, pāṣāṇa, siddha, sādhya, jala, akṣīṇi, āgāmi*. The term *bhoga* is used frequently in early charters in different syntactic contexts; for example, the Valkhā plate in Ramesh and Tiwari, *Copper-Plate Hoard*, 1 (line 5): *grāmāḥ pañcabhogatvenātisṛṣṭās*, "the villages are granted with five entitlements." Also see Kairā plates of Dadda II, Mirashi, CII 4 (1955): 63 (lines 44–45): *sāmānyabhogabhūpradānaphalepsubhiḥ*, "desiring the reward of a land donation which includes the totality of entitlements." Near identical text ibid., 41 (line 25) in Abhona plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa, Kalacuri year 347 (CE 597).
353. In the Gunaighar charter for example, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 342 (lines 7–8). This helps explain the wording of the Bhamodra Mohotā charter in which the entitlements are qualified.
354. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 357–58 (lines 12–13): *na kaścid rājārtthavirodha upacaya eva bhaṭṭārkapādānāṃ dharmmaphalaṣaḍbhāgāvāptiś ca tad dīyatām iti*, "Moreover . . . there with will be no injury whatever to the king's interest, rather (the possibility of) income and the acquisition of one-sixth of the religious merit for his gracious Lordship. Hence (the land) should be given (by sale)."
355. Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 279, wants to reduce the relationship of the king and deity to "a talismanic presence or apotropaic force." He also asserts that the god was

*never* "a granter of heavenly mandate, a justifier of rule and a transcendent real-estate agent awarding parcels of land." Exaggerated wording aside, this is incorrect, as will be evident from the information presented in this chapter.

356. Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation* (Oxford, 1998): 37; *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* (3: 9: 17: 4): *yajamāṇo vā aśvaḥ*. Further correspondences with the king are explored in Steven E. Lindquist, "Enigmatic Numismatics: Kings, Horses and the Aśvamedha Coin-type," *SAS* 19 (2003): 107. The author cautiously states that he is "not arguing that the Guptas were aware of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*" (ibid., 111, n. 23) but the Parivrājaka plates record grants to brāhmaṇas learned in the *White Yajurveda*, so it is certain that the texts were known in areas ruled by Gupta subordinates; see further discussion in Section 3.3.
357. *Jyotiṣavedāṅga*, edited by R. Shama Sastri (Mysore, 1936): v. 3.
358. Cited and discussed in Brian K. Smith et al., "Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual Mystification and Mythical Demystification," *Numen* 36 (1989): 197.
359. For our position without an archaeology of ritual, see Gérard Colas, "History of Vaiṣṇava Traditions," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, edited by Gavin Flood (Oxford, 2003): 232. "It remains difficult to evaluate . . . to what extent the aristocratic patrons of Bhāgavatism from the second century BC to the eighth century AD were personally engaged in this tradition and religion. We do not know whether Bhāgavata gods were merely their tutelary deity or whether these patrons underwent initiation, nor do we have any precise information on the type of rite performed."
360. Cited and discussed in Gonda, *Prajāpati and the Year*, 91.

## Chapter 3. Ritual Action and Ritual Actors

1. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 82.
2. My analysis here, which I qualify as tentative and preliminary rather than exhaustive and final, is framed by the historical questions first raised in R. Inden, "Changes in the Vedic Priesthood," 556–77, reprinted in Inden, *Text and Practice*, 102–25. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 138–40 has touched on the place of brāhmaṇas in Gupta society, but the assessment may be discounted as noted in note 145 in Chapter 2. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 135–39, in a section called "Religion and Gupta Politics" gives a brief assessment of religious forces in the Gupta period but the treatment is desultory; a summary of Goyal's position is given in R. K. Mitra, "S. R. Goyal and Modern Historiography of the Gupta Age," in *Reappraising Gupta History for S. R. Goyal*, edited by B. C. Chhabra et al. (Delhi, 1992): 15–37. More recently the priesthood has been revisited from a traditional Vedic perspective, Minkowski, *Priesthood in Ancient India*. On the closely related question of brāhmaṇas and their history, see M. Witzel, "Toward a History of the Brahmins," *JAOS* 113 (1993): 264–68 in which he assesses two problematic books: Chitralekha Gupta, *Brahmanas of India: A study Based on Inscriptions* (Delhi, 1983) and Swati Datta (née Sen Gupta), *Migrant Brāhmaṇas in the Northern India: Their Settlement and General Impact c. AD 475–1030* (Delhi, 1989). Govind Prasad Upadhyay, *Brāhmaṇas in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1979) is reviewed in Richard Salomon, *JAOS* 102 (1982): 555–56.
3. Ali, *Courtly Culture*, Chapter 1.
4. The date of the *Arthaśāstra* is discussed in Section 1.10.
5. *Arthaśāstra* (1: 9): *purohitam uditoditakulaśīlaṃ sāṅge vede daive nimitte daṇḍanītyāṃ cābhivinītam āpadāṃ daivamānuṣīṇāṃ atharvabhir upāyaiś ca pratikartāraṃ kurvīta*. On the word *nimitta*, "omen or prognostic sign," see Jan

Gonda, "Nimitta," in *Selected Studies*, 6. 1: 206–13; more generally, Inden, "Kings and Omens," in *Text and Practice*, 179–91. The office of *purohita* came to Atharvavedins at a relatively late stage, see further note 70 in this chapter. The office is surveyed with encyclopaedic mastery in Gonda, "Purohita," in *Selected Studies*, 2: 320–37; more briefly in Gonda, "The Guru," in *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 243–49. Also John W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India: A Study of Kingship from the Earliest Times to circa A.D. 300* (Oxford, 1964): 72–79. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 3: 118–20, devotes a few pages to the "purohita and the state" but in the absence of critical historical methods can only catalogue the statements of the law books which a priori appear to offer divergent opinions. Here we confine ourselves to sources of the Gupta and immediate post-Gupta periods. Below the *purohita* were diviners (*naimittika*), astrologers (*mauhūrtika*), and assistant priests (*purohitapuruṣa*). They do not concern us here.

6. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, edited with the commentary *Mitākṣarā* etc. by U. C. Pandey, Kashi Sanskrit series, 178 (Varanasi, 1967) 2: 313: *purohitaṃ prakurvīta daivajñam uditoditam | daṇḍanītyāṃ ca kuśalam atharvāṅgirase tathā*. Other *dharma*-texts deal with the subject in a more general way; for example, *Viṣṇusmṛti* (3: 70) lays down that the *purohita* should be conversant with the Vedas and other branches of knowledge, of good family, and persistent in the practice of austerities.
7. *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa*, edited by George Melville Bolling and Julius von Negelein (Leipzig, 1909) (3: 1: 10). On the *Atharvaveda* itself there has been recent work: Arlo Griffiths, *The Paippalādasaṃhitā of the Atharvaveda* (Groningen, 2008) and *The Atharvaveda and its Paippalāda Śākhā: Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition*, edited by Arlo Griffiths and Annette Schmiedchen (Halle, Indologica Halensis, 2007).
8. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 457. This documents that mendicants (*tairthika*) at the *devakula* of Jīvaśivasvāmin performed the *śānti* (= *śāntika*) and *svasti* (= *pauṣṭika*) *ayana* (= *karma*) to increase the king's victory, merit, and strength. An early link of the *Atharvaveda* to south India is thus demonstrated.
9. Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* (2: 8: 4–5): *rājanyakaṃ ca nṛpatikṣatriyāṇāṃ gaṇe kramāt | mantrī dhīsacivo 'mātyo 'nye karmasacivās tataḥ || mahāmātrāḥ pradhānāni purodhās tu purohitaḥ | draṣṭari vyavahārāṇāṃ prāḍvivākākṣadarśakau*. For the period of Amarasiṃha, see Vogel, *Indian Lexicography*, discussed also in Chapter 1.
10. *Nītisāra* (1: 2–6). The word *pratigrāhaka* in the first verse has a technical sense and refers to the customary privilege of brāhmaṇas to receive gifts. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 842. Its use in the Gupta period is shown in the Māṇḍhal plates of Pravarasena II, see Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 88, 90. *Nītisāra* 1: 6 can be understood in more depth using Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, 72, 173.
11. The words do not match exactly, but a precise terminological link between the *Nītisāra* and the Atharvavedic *purohita* in the *Arthaśāstra* is provided by the *ābhicārika* rites mentioned in *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 3: 1: 10, cited previously. The destruction of the Nandas is also attributed to Kauṭilya's magical spells in the *Mudrārākṣasa* (4: 12): *kauṭilyaḥ kopano 'pi svayam abhicaraṇe jñātaduḥkhaḥ pratijñām | daivāt tīrṇapratijñaḥ punar api na karoty āyatiglānibhītaḥ*, "And Kauṭilya, enraged as he is, will recall all the sorrow the vow he accomplished begot, and if chance helped him once, he will hesitate now lest it strike him before its fulfilment." Translation of van Buitenen, *Two Plays from Ancient India*, 234–35. It is worth adding here that the opening verse of the *Nītisāra* states that it is the king who is *daṇḍadhāra*; the *Arthaśāstra* says that the *purohita* is versed in *daṇḍanīti*. The first implies the power to apply whatever punishment was called for, the second its

oversight or administration, normally in the hands of the king. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India*, 107–11.

12. The *purohita* is mentioned in a Sena charter, see R. D. Banerji, "The Naihati Grant of Vallala-Sena; the 11th Year," *EI* 14 (1917–18): 160 (line 32), but this is a mere list of persons of rank: *rājaputrarājāmātyapurohitamahādharmmādhyakṣa*, and so on. More specifically, a *burohida* named Drugila is listed among the court figures associated with the Palola Ṣāhi ruler Vikramādityanandin in a colophon of the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā*, Oskar von Hinüber, *Die Palola Ṣāhis*, Antiquities of Northern Pakistan (Mainz, 2004) vol. 5: no. 6, 19–20, and the title appears in some of the Upper Indus valley graffiti, see Gérard Fussman and Ditte König, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans, Band 2 (Mainz, 1997): 156: 3. Fascinating as these examples are, their date, location, and Buddhist context marks them as peripheral to the present study.
13. There are two references to *Atharvaveda* brāhmaṇas in Vākāṭaka inscriptions: (a) Tiroḍī plates of Pravarasena II, published in Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 48–52; Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 27; and (b) Bāshim or Wāshim plates of Vindhyaśakti II, published in Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 93–100; Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 37. Both sets of plates record village grants to brāhmaṇas of the *Atharvaveda*. The post-Gupta historical context for the Paippalāda recension is set out in Arlo Griffiths "Aspects of the Study of the Paippalāda Atharva Vedic Tradition," in *Ātharvaṇa: A Collection of Essays on the Atharva Veda with special reference to its Paippalāda Tradition*, edited by Abhijit Ghosh (Kolkata, 2002): 167–79.
14. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 288–89; the further particulars of this record are discussed in Section 2.11.
15. The seminal work on this sect is David N. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects*, 2nd revised, edition (Delhi, 1991). Early epigraphic references to Kāpālikas are also collected in Lorenzen, "Early Evidence for Tantric Religion," in *The Roots of Tantra*, edited by K. A. Harper and Robert L. Brown (Albany, 2002): 30–31. The record under discussion here is not, however, included in Lorenzen's list.
16. The fourteenth book of the *Arthaśāstra* has many thematic links to medicine, see Wujastyk, *Roots of Ayurveda*, 181–89. From the side of the *purohita*, the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (14: 2: 2: 19) describes the Atharvavedin, who has claimed the office of both *purohita* and *brahmán*, as the "Physician of the sacrifice," Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 271. The relation of polity and medicine is defined more generally in *Arthaśāstra* (14: 3: 88): *mantrabhaiṣajyasaṃyuktā yogā māyākṛtāś ca ye | upahanyād amitrāṃ staiḥ svajanaṃ cābhipālayet*, "practices accompanied by *mantra*-s and medicine and those caused by illusion – with them one should destroy enemies and protect one's own people." As an example of a specific point of contact between Suśruta and Kauṭilya, the discussion of protective decoctions that can be smeared on drums and flags can be noted, see Wujastyk, *Roots of Ayurveda*, 122, and compare *Arthaśāstra* 14: 4: 12–13, which notes how a pill made from certain substances removes all poison and that "the sound of musical instruments smeared with these destroys poison; looking at a flag or standard smeared with these one becomes free from poison" (*tūryāṇāṃ taiḥ praliptānāṃ śabdo viṣavināśanaḥ | liptadhvajaṃ patākāṃ vā dṛṣṭvā bhavati nirviṣaḥ*).
17. *Nītisāra* (10: 11): *rahasyena prayogena rahasyakaraṇena vā | vigrahaṃ nāśayed vīro bandhunāśasamudbhavam*. Some may be tempted to label these things "Tantric" and to use Tantra as a term to describe esoteric Śaiva and transgressive practices generally, but as André Padoux has perceptively noted, this category is current only among occidental observers and those following their methods. Neither in traditional India nor in Sanskrit texts is there a term for this Tantrism; no description or

definition of such a thing is to be found anywhere. Padoux, "What Do We Mean by Tantrism?" in *Roots of Tantra*, p. 17. Padoux does not dismiss the term entirely, apparently out of respect for the work of earlier scholars. But he has effectively demolished the validity of this Indological category. Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 2, fasc. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1981): I deal with the problem tangentially, but now see Sanjukta Gupta, *IIJ* 46 (2003): 273 "Over the years it has become obvious that there exists no such thing [as Tantrism]." If I may be permitted a reminiscence, J. A. B. van Buitenen once said, in an enigmatic manner that frequently infuriated his students, that "Tantra is what you call it." He refused to say more. Of course, his is the only possible definition of a term that has no meaning.

18. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 1: 2–3) and in slightly modified form in *AŚ* (5: 1: 35–36). The physician was on the receiving end of this tactic; Suśruta gives several hints on how to spot a poisoner; Wujastyk, *Roots of Ayurveda*, 182–83. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 264, has collected references to the term *mleccha* and its interpretation in the secondary literature; he rightly notes that it "never carried a fixed meaning." Goyal has not, however, extended his survey to textual sources such as the *Arthaśāstra* passage under discussion or the *Mudrārākṣasa* (for which see Section 1.9 with relevant secondary literature). The use of *mleccha*-s (however defined) in 'defence of the four *varṇa*-s' (i.e., in the manufacture of an orthodox social order), undermines the simplistic division of Indian and foreign which has enjoyed currency in post-Independence writing.
19. Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India*.
20. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (12: 43): *hastinaś ca turaṃgāś ca śūdrā mlecchāś ca garhitāḥ | siṃhā vyāghrā varāhāś ca madhyamā tāmasī gatiḥ*.
21. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 1: 4–28). The end of this account is emphatically marked by the phrase: *iti yogasaṃpat*.
22. There are two terms in the text, *puṣyeṇa* (e.g., *Arthaśāstra* 14: 3: 12–14; 14: 3: 56): on the Puṣya day, and *puṣyayoginyāṃ* (e.g., *Arthaśāstra* 14: 3: 80): in the conjunction of Puṣya, the day on which the moon is in the conjunction of Puṣya.
23. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 3: 28) and (14: 3: 85): *kṛṣṇacaturdaśyāṃ puṣyayoginyāṃ*; also in *AŚ* 14: 3: 80 with the full moon as an alternate. In *AŚ* 14: 3: 49, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight is also mentioned but the month not given.
24. On Yama, see Charles Malamoud, *Le Jumeau solaire* (Paris 2002). On the southern side in initiation, see Bakker, "At the Right Side of the Teacher," 117–34.
25. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 1: 34): *vidyutpradagdho 'ṅgāro jvālo vā vidyutpradagdhaiḥ kāṣṭhair gṛhītaś cānuvāsitaḥ kṛttikāsu bharaṇīṣu vā raudreṇa karmaṇā 'bhihuto 'gniḥ praṇītaś ca niṣpratīkāro dahati*, "A charcoal burnt by lightning or a flame caused by it, caught and fed with wood burnt by lightning – this fire, with offerings made into it under the Kṛttikās or the Bharaṇīs in a rite in honour of Rudra, burns, when directed towards an enemy, without remedy."
26. See Modak, *Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda*, 231.
27. The mythology is summarised in Agrawala, *Ancient Indian Folk Cults*, 70–71; Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 115–16, and S. Czuma, *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India* (Cleveland, 1985): 124–25. Richard Mann, "Parthian and Hellenistic Influences on the Development of Skanda's Cult in North India: Evidence from Kuṣāṇa-Era Art and Coins," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 15 (2001): 111–28, but note that the Udayagiri caves show that Mann is wrong to say (113) that Gupta Mātṛkās are not shown with Skanda.
28. Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, 270, with six-headed figure and legend, the latter discussed in Devendra Handa, *Tribal Coins of Ancient India* (Delhi,

2007): 199–201. The type discussed by Allan (cxliii) seems also to be Kārttikeya, but Allan admits the possibility of Śiva. Allan's scepticism about the Śaiva identification is justified because Śiva was associated with five aspects, a tradition reaching back to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, see Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 70.

29. D. M. Srinivasan, "Skanda/Kārttikeya in the Early Art of the Northwest," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 5 (1997–98): 233–68.
30. Śaktidhara as Kārttikeya rests on Amarasiṃha, thus a meaning current in Gupta times. *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* (1: 40–41): *kārttikeyo mahāsenaḥ śarajanmā ṣaḍānanaḥ | pārvatīnandanaḥ skandaḥ senānīr agnibhūr guhaḥ* || 40 *bāhulepyas tārakajid viśākhaḥ śikhivāhanaḥ | ṣāṇmāturaḥ śaktidharaḥ kumāraḥ krauñcadāraṇaḥ* || 41.
31. For Amarasiṃha on *purohita*, see note 9 in this chapter. The appointment of judges is taken up in *AŚ* 3: 17: 1. Persons of ministerial rank are assigned to the position of judge on the frontier; the judge in centre of the kingdom is not mentioned because it is assumed to be the *purohita*.
32. *Nītisāra* (1: 4–5) and *Arthaśāstra* (14: 1: 34); the text passages have been given above. After dealing with poison, *AŚ* 14: 1: 29–32 turns to poison-dependant weapons. In *AŚ* 14: 1: 33 we have one weapon before invincible fire, something that might seem to damage the present argument. But the presence of the weapon at this juncture is due to the fact that the dead animal used in the ritual is to be handled by a man condemned to death; it is thus unclean and similar to the poisons handled by *mleccha*-s.
33. This statement is somewhat reductionist: in a large country and with an ancient and complex society, we should hardly expect absolute uniformity in the Vedic associations of the Kāpālikas. Thus an inscription from Bangalore, for which Lorenzen, *Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, 221, records a donation to a Taittirīya named Kāpāliśarman.
34. For example, *Arthaśāstra* (14: 3: 29 and 49). The *kapāla* appears frequently in later images as a ritual object.
35. *AŚ* (14: 3: 10–13): *trirātropoṣitaḥ puṇyeṇa kālāyasīm añjanīṃ śalākāṃ ca kārayet* ||10 *tato niśācarāṇāṃ sattvānām anyatamasya śiraḥkapālamañjanena pūrayitvā mṛtāyāḥ striyā yonau praveśya dāhayet* ||11 *tad añjanaṃ puṣyeṇoddhatya tasyām añjanyāṃ nidadhyāt* ||12 *tenābhyaktākṣo naṣṭacchāyārūpaś carati* ||13.
36. *AŚ* (14: 3: 30–31): *dvitīyasyāṃ caturdaśyām uddhṛtya kumāryā peṣayitvā gulikāḥ kārayet* ||30 *tata ekāṃ gulikām abhimantrayitvā yatraitena mantreṇa kṣipati tat sarvaṃ prasvāpayati* ||31.
37. *AŚ* (14: 3: 62–63): *caṇḍālīkumbhīumbakaṭukasāraughaḥ sanārībhagosi | svāhā* ||62 *tālodghāṭanaṃ prasvāpanaṃ ca* ||63.
38. *AŚ* (14: 1: 39): *adite namas te anumate namas te sarasvati namas te deva savitar namas te.*
39. *AŚ* (14: 3: 44): *paulomīṃ yaśasvinīṃ*, "Paulomī, the illustrious."
40. Yokochi, *Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India*, Chapter 1, n. 42, gives an authoritative review discussion of the relevant evidence. Compare J. N. Tiwari, *Goddess Cults in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1985): 63–64 and 74–75; also Renate Söhnen-Thieme, "Goddess, Gods and Demons in the Devīmāhātmya," 239–60.
41. See the material collected in Apte, *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *mātṛka*.
42. Lorenzen, *Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, 219–20. Citing Yāmunācārya's *Āgama-prāmāṇya*, edited by J. A. B. van Buitenen (Madras, 1971): 43 and comparing this to an inscription of Śaka year 973 from Kolanupaka, Andhra Pradesh, for which P. V. Parabrahma Sastry, *Select Epigraphs of Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad, 1965): 7–10, Lorenzen notes that the six insignia are (1) *karṇikā*, a type of ear-ring; (2) *rucaka*, a necklace; (3) *kuṇḍala*, a type of ear-ring; (4) *śikhāmaṇi*, a crest-jewel;

(5) *bhasma*, ashes; (6) *yajñopavita*, the sacred thread. The *upamudrā* or subsidiary insignia are *kapāla* (skull), *khaṭvāṅga* (club), the inscription adding *ḍamaruka* and *mṛdaṅga* drums. Other sources give *kaṇṭhikā*, a type of necklace, in lieu of *karṇikā* (Lorenzen, *Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, p. 2) but for the present purposes the difference is not substantial. Lorenzen returns to the insignia in his "New Data on the Kāpālikas," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees*, edited by Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany, 1989): 234. The initiated Pāśupata had six different insignia but six nonetheless, see Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 67, n. 35.

43. There are three goddess shrines at the site, each slightly different from the another. Following the numbering given by Patil, *Monuments of the Udayagiri Hill*, and elaborating on his descriptions, the shrines are as follows: (1) Cave 4 and the adjacent niche (unnumbered) with six goddesses, the focus of discussion here; (2) Cave 6 and the shrine immediately adjacent to it, shown here in Figure 26. This also has six seated mothers flanked by much-abraded figures of Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa; (3) A niche located a few metres to the right of the goddess shrine just mentioned. This has eight mothers seated on a bench with a much-damaged Kārttikeya, on a peacock, at a higher level. An explanation that may put forward tentatively for this cave is that it is a later addition built to meet the needs of a *purohita* subsequent to the time of Candragupta II. Discussion of these shrines is taken up in Harper, "Warring Śaktis: A Paradigm for Gupta Conquests," 115–31 but this scholar's work is flawed by an inaccurate account of the actual shrines, incorrect iconographic identifications, a tautological argument about "tantra" and a misunderstanding of the relevant Sanskrit texts, notably the *Nītisāra*; I thus find myself in significant disagreement with the assessment given by C. Wedemeyer in *JRAS* 14 (2004): 139.
44. Illustrated in Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 10.
45. Ibid., Plate 9.
46. For example the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, edited with an introduction by Cārudeva Śāstrī and Nāgaśaraṇa Siṃha (Delhi, 2nd edition, 1998): *caturmūrteḥ kumārasya rūpaṃ te vacmi yādava || kumāraś ca tathā skando viśākhaś ca gurus tathā || kumāraḥ ṣaṇmukhaḥ kāryaḥ śikhaṇḍakavibhūṣaṇaḥ | raktāmbaradharaḥ kāryo mayūravaravāhanaḥ || kukkuṭaś ca tathā ghaṇṭā tasya dakṣiṇahastayoḥ | patākā vaijayantī ca śaktiḥ kāryā ca vāmayoḥ || skando viśākhaś ca guhaḥ kartavyaś ca kumāravat | ṣaṇmukhās te na kartavyā na mayūragatās tathā ||* (3: 71: 2–6; folio 344).
47. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 326 (line 9): *skandapradhānair bhuvi mātṛbhiś ca*. The much-damaged inscription at Badoh Pathārī, next to the images of the goddesses, also mentions the mothers ARE (1961–62): number 1695; Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, *Annual Report (VS 1982)*: appendix D, number 15 (lines 6–7): *bhagavatyo mātaraḥ*.
48. Charles J. Goodwin, "The Skandayāga: Text and Translation," *Proceedings of the American Oriental Society* 1890, v–xiii in *JAOS* 15 (1893); summarised in Modak, *Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda*, 295–97; further discussion in V. S. Agrawala, *Ancient Indian Folk Cults*, 69–96 (chapter on *Khandamaha* or festival of Skanda). The best general survey of the supplements of the *Atharvaveda* remains Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, pp. 307–11, but read with Peter Bisschop and Arlo Griffiths, "The Paśupata Observance (Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa 40)," *IIJ* 46 (2003): 315–48. As Gonda notes, the *AV* supplements constitute an informative survey of late Vedic and early Hindu practices. The *Skandayāga* most probably belongs to the fourth to sixth centuries: it already knows the myth of Skanda as the son of Śiva and Agni, and it also has a well-developed suite of *pūjā*-offerings, akin to or slightly more developed than those documented in the copper-plate charters of Gupta times. Among the Tibetans, Skanda is known as *sKem Byed*, the "causer of thirst or dehydration,"

a name that goes back to his Indic role as deity connected with fever and the protection of children. But the word also refers to the spirituous offering made to a god for the success of any enterprise and the priest who makes this offering (*gSer sKem Pa*).

49. *Skandayāga* (2: 6): *tam ahaṃ mātṛbhiḥ sārdhaṃ dhūrtam* [= *skandam*] *āvāhayāmy aham*. Skanda is also described in this text as *kṛttikāputra* – the son of the Kṛttikās – and as having six mouths. The epithet *kṛttikāputra* is carried into medieval texts, see *Srīmad Bhāgavatam* (6: 6: 14).
50. This would take us to the *liṅga* in Cave 4 as would the *Arthaśāstra* rite mentioning worship of Rudra; see note 25 in this chapter. The point here is that this demonstrates a connection between the Atharvavedic *purohita* and the worship of Rudra Śiva.
51. Modak, *Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda*, 201–32.
52. Ibid., 296. The point about Hermes is derived from Goodwin, "Skandayāga," vii. Such comparisons have little place here and in any case have been superseded: A. M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors: An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society*, edited and with an introduction by Rodney Needham with a foreword by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (Chicago, 1970): 16–19, makes a more convincing case for the identity of Hermes and Agni.
53. The commentaries *Jayamaṅgalāṭīkā* and *Upādhyāyanirapekṣā* give a different explanation: It is either a *gotra* name or derived from the word *kuṭila* or *kuṭi*, an earthen pitcher used to gather grain for fire offerings, see Mital, *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra Revisited*, 9–10. In the closing verse of the prologue of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, Kauṭilya is differently described as having a cunning or crooked intellect (*kauṭilyaḥ kuṭilamatiḥ*), a point noted in Trautmann, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, 10. As the *Mudrārākṣasa* significantly predates the commentaries, this explanation counters their manifestly contrived arguments.
54. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 3: 88): *mantrabhaiṣajyasaṃyuktā yogā māyākṛtāś ca ye | upahanyād amitrāṃs taiḥ svajanaṃ cābhipālayet*. The battles between the gods and demons in the *Harivaṃśa* provide a theological and mythological framework for the weapons in the *Arthaśāstra*, notably the Tārakāmaya war. As noted in Section 1.5, the demons used *māyā* to cover the battleground with a special fire produced from the thigh of Ūrva who gave it to his disciple Hiraṇyakaśipu; summary in Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 143. In the *Arthaśāstra* (14: 3: 19, 43) the *purohita* invokes a number of *asura*-s, among them Kumbha and Nikumbha and Bali, son of Virocana, demons who belong to the family lineage of Hiraṇyakaśipu; ibid., 102, 142. This suggests that the *māyā*-based practices of the *purohita* were understood as descending, at least in part, in the traditions of demonic power. This confirms our understanding of the *purohita* as a figure at once in society and beyond it, a man who, because of the conditions in the Kali age, was required to mediate between the ostensibly pure or good and the impure or evil.
55. *Arthaśāstra* 14: 2 carries the title *pralambhanaṃ tatra adbhutotpādanam*; 14: 3 is called *pralambhanaṃ tatra bhaiṣajyamantrayogaḥ*.
56. As noted by Ingo Strauch, "*Arthaśāstra* und *Cauraśāstra*: Diebeskunst und Magie im alten Indien," in *Tohfa-e-Dil: Festschrift Helmut Nespital* (Reinbeck, 2001) 1: 501–30, portions of the *Arthaśāstra* seem to have been derived from *Cauraśāstra*; the continuing association of Skanda with thieves (compare Modak, *Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda*, 424, n. 588) is shown by the *Ṣaṇmukhakalpa*, see Dieter George, *Ṣaṇmukhakalpa: ein Lehrbuch der Zauberei und Diebeskunst aus dem indischen Mittelalter*, Monographien zur indischen Archaeologie, Kunst und Philologie, Bd 7 (Berlin, 1991).
57. *Skandayāga* (2: 5): *ghaṇṭāpatākinī* and *Skandayāga* (2: 6): *yaś ca mātṛgaṇair nityaṃ sadā parivṛto yuvā*.

58. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 74–76. The year is expired.
59. For this conclusion we again appeal to Amarasiṃha for whose text see note 9 in this chapter.
60. Illustrated in Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 65.
61. Based on Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 76 and Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 405 (lines 35–36) with changes.
62. To expand on the point, I would quote the Buddhist *dhāraṇī* known as *Āryatathāgatoūṣṇīṣasītatapatre*, not the most obvious illustration but one that highlights the ubiquity of the connection between thunder and the monsoon rains. Here the rains are linked to the serpent kings rather than the Mothers: "In due time Nāgarāja Ananta and Nāgarāja Śaṅkhapāla and Nāgarāja Mahākāla will cause the rain to fall. And in due time clouds will gather, and in due time the sound of thunder will roll." Less controversially we may cite the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* in which Chapters 21–23 deal specifically with clouds and rain.
63. Lorenzen, "Early Evidence," 29–30, has summarised the secondary literature on this passage and offered additional suggestions.
64. The lyre has a long history in Indian art and literature, see Rai Krishnadasa, "A Vāsavadattā Udayana Terracotta Plaque from Kauśāmbī," *JUPHS* 18 (1945): 82–90.
65. *Arthaśāstra* (14:1:1): *cāturvarṇyarakṣārtham aupaniṣadikam adharmiṣṭheṣu prayuñjīta*.
66. Geoffrey Samuel, "Buddhism and the State in Eighth Century Tibet," in *Religions and Secular Culture in Tibet, Tibetan Studies II, PIATS 2000*, edited by Henk Blezer (Leiden, 2002): 1–19. The elaboration of the Padmasambhava biography is an additional problem, see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed* (Vienna, 2000): 58. The case is more complex with regard to Śaiva *guru*-s who appear to have encroached on the chaplain's ritual duties, so combining aspects of the *purohita*'s role with that of the *ācārya/guru*. The erosion of the *purohita*'s power was first noted in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 3: 126 based on several mainstream sources; Sanderson arrives at the same conclusion on the *Netratantra*, a medieval Śaiva text from Kashmir, and the *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa*, see his "Religion and State," 271–72. The Gupta-period *ācārya* is taken up in Section 3.6.
67. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 2: 38): *śastrahastasya śūlaprotasya vā vāmapārśvaparśukāsthiṣu kalmāṣaveṇunā nirmathito 'gniḥ striyāḥ puruṣasya vā 'sthiṣu manuṣyaparśukayā nirmathito 'gnir yatra trir apasavyaṃ gacchati na cātrānyo 'gnir jvalati*, "Where a fire kindled by churning a speckled bamboo-reed in the ribs from the left side of a man slain with a weapon or impaled on the stake, or a fire kindled by churning the rib of a human being in the bones of a woman or man, goes round three times left wise, there no other fire burns." The prevention of cooking in a hearth in *Arthaśāstra* (14: 2: 32) may also be interpreted as a form of ritual interference. The degree to which the "secret practices" apply to other domains is evident from *Arthaśāstra* (1: 20: 3–4). The chapter is concerned with the planning of a royal residence (*antaḥpura*, on which term in epigraphic usage; see Willis, "Some Notes on the Palaces of the Imperial Gurjara-Pratīhāras," *JRAS* 5 [1995]: 351–60, more generally, Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 38–45). The arrangement of the palace area is to be varied out of fear of fellow students (*sahādhyāyibhayāt*) and rites performed to prevent the place from being set ablaze: "When fire [churned] from human [bone] is taken round the palace three times from right [to left], no other fire burns [it] nor does another fire blaze up there; also when it is smeared with ashes caused by lightning and hail water mixed with earth" (*mānuṣeṇāgninā trir apasavyaṃ parigatam antaḥpuraṃ agnir anyo na dahati na cātrānyo 'gnir jvalati vaidyutena bhasmanā mṛtsaṃ yuktena*

*karakavāriṇāvaliptaṃ ca*). This is an adaptation of the rite given in *Arthaśāstra* (14: 2: 38) meaning that, with slight modification, the fire-prevention ritual can be used to protect the king's residential camp.

68. *Arthaśāstra* (14: 1: 22). This would have been particularly important as the power of priests depends on *mantraśakti*, the power of *mantra* or invocation, on which see Gonda, "The Indian Mantra," in *Selected Studies*, 4: 248–301. Examples of deliberate sabotage are taken up in Brian K. Smith, "Ritual Perfection and Ritual Sabotage in the Veda," *History of Religions* 35 (1996): 285–306.
69. *Arthaśāstra* (14:3: 58–60): *caturbhaktopavāsī kṛṣṇacaturdaśyāṃ bhagnasya puruṣasyāsthnarṣabhaṃ kārayed abhimantrayeccaitena* ||58 *dvigoyuktaṃ goyānam āhṛtaṃ bhavati* ||59 *tataḥ param ākāśe vikrāmati* ||60, "Having fasted for four meals one should, on the fourteenth of the dark fortnight, make a bull from the bone of a broken man and should consecrate it with this (*mantra*) [given in verses 51–52]. A bullock-cart with two bullocks is obtained. Then he courses high in the air."
70. Gonda, "Purohita," 2: 320–37; E. W. Hopkins, "Position of the Ruling Caste," *JAOS* 13 (1889): 151–62. For a concise review of how the Atharvavedins successfully claimed the office of *purohita* and *brahmán*, Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 269–71, with citations to the relevant secondary literature. Also discussed in H. W. Bodewitz, "The Fourth Priest (the brahmán) in Vedic Ritual," in *Selected Studies on Ritual in Indian Religions*, edited by R. Kloppenborg (Leiden, 1984): 33–68, and more recently Joel P. Brereton, "Bráhman, Brahmán and the Sacrificer," 325–44.
71. *Brahmatva-Māñjarī: Role of the Brahman Priest in the Vedic Ritual*, edited and translated by H. G. Ranade (Poona, 1984).
72. Gonda, *Ritual Sūtras*, 472 and 493–94 citing other sources for more details. The protohistory of the *brahmán* has been partially reconstructed in Witzel, "The Development of the Vedic Canon and Its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu (Materials on the Vedic Śākhās 8)," *Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts: New Approaches to the Study of the Vedas*, Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora vol. 2, edited by M. Witzel (Cambridge, 1997): 277 and 291–92.
73. *Brahmatva-Māñjarī*, ii.
74. Hopkins, "Position of the Ruling Caste," 154.
75. See note 100 in Chapter 2. The *brahmán* cum *purohita* also had three assistants: Brāhmaṇācchaṃsin, Agnīdhra and Potṛ. There were, nonetheless, debates in the Gupta period about the enumerations and who might be call *ṛtvij*, see Gaṅganātha Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3 vols. (Baroda, 1933–36) 1: 643.
76. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 78): *purohitaṃ ca kurvīta vṛṇuyād eva cartvijaḥ | te 'sya gṛhyāṇi karmāṇi kuryur vaitānikāni ca*. Translation in G. Bühler, SBE, vol. 25: 228; more recently Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 158. For the epigraphic citation of the text in Gupta times, see note 95 in Chapter 2. The absolute historical position of the text is taken up later.
77. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (2: 314): *śrautasmārtakriyāhetor vṛṇuyād eva cartvijaḥ | yajñāṃścaiva prakurvīta vidhivad bhūridakṣiṇān*. Also prescribed in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 79).
78. Vijñānésvara *ad Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (2: 314): *yajñāṃś ca rājasūyādin vidhivad yathāvidhānaṃ bhūridakṣiṇān bahudakṣiṇān eva kuryāt*.
79. The *rājasūya* has been discussed in Chapter 1. The literature is summarised in Minkowski, *Priesthood in Ancient India*, 18 in addition to which Louis Renou, *Hymnes spéculatifs du Véda* (Paris, 1956) esp. his translation and notes on the horse of sacrifice, 18–19. In sources hostile to the Guptas, the work of priests is denigrated, notably the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, which condemns Samudragupta for having bad

councillors and performing animal sacrifices; K. P. Jayaswal, *An Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit Text* (Lahore, 1934): 48. Also in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa plates Candragupta is said, out of fear, to have associated goblins (*piśāca*), presumably through the medium of a *purohita*.

80. BMC 59, Prinsep Collection. Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, 22. The key study of these coins, cited already in Chapter 1, is Lindquist, "Kings, Horses and the Aśvamedha Coin-type."
81. Lindquist, "Kings, Horses and the Aśvamedha Coin-type," p. 106.
82. Rapson, "Notes on Indian Coins and Seals, Part IV. Indian Seals and Clay Impressions," *JRAS* (1901): 97–108. Seal in question, p. 102, plate facing p. 98, no. 3. This seal was in the collection of Mr. L. White King; it is not among those that found their way to the British Museum.
83. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 295.
84. The bird-shaped altars excavated at Jagat Gram near Dehra Dun are perhaps the most well-known, *ARE* (1952–53): section B, numbers 108–10; *Indian Archaeology – A Review* 1 (1953–54): 10–11 and Plates XIII-XV. Also see Sircar, "Brick Inscription of Damamitra," *EI* 33 (1959–60): 99–100, A. S. Altekar, "Musanagar Brick Inscriptions," *EI* 30 (1953–54): 118–20, and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, 73, n. 3.
85. V. A. Smith, "Observations on Gupta Coinage," *JRAS* (1893): 97–98, and plate facing p. 148. Smith reads: [*sam*]*udda guttassa deyadhamma*. There seems to be no subsequent reference to verify this record, see *ARE* (1951–52): 34 (section B, number 264). The use of Prakrit in a dispensation that was manifestly Sanskritic raises doubts, contra Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 41. The horse is illustrated in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Plate 11. There are undeciphered shell inscriptions on the image, see Salomon, "New Sankalipi (Shell Character) Inscriptions." Another horse is reported from Darelganj, for which A. A. Führer, *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Allahābād, 1891): 130, apparently now State Museum, Lucknow. This remains to be double-checked as all things connected with Führer are contaminated and intellectually suspect, see discussion in my "Sānchī Bodhisattva", 269, and Falk, "Zur Geschichte von Lumbinī," *Acta Orientalia* 52 (1991): 70–90.
86. Jaganath Das Ratnakar, "Discovery of a New Historical Stone Horse," *IHQ* 3 (1927): 719–28; T. K. Biswas, Bhogendra Jha, *Gupta Sculptures: Bharat Kala Bhavan* (Varanasi, 1985): Figure 127.
87. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 37–38. Some examples can be cited: the sacrificial posts from Īsāpur, Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 126; commemorative posts (*yūpa*) with inscriptions recording sacrificial performances at Nāndsā and Badvā in Rājasthān, A. S. Altekar, "Nandsa Yupa Inscriptions," *EI* 27 (1947–48): 252–67; Altekar, "Three Maukhari Inscriptions on Yupas," *EI* 23 (1935): 42–52. However, the dates, contra Altekar, cannot be assigned to the Kṛta era. Another pillar was erected by Viṣṇuvardhana to commemorate his completion of the *puṇḍarīka* sacrifice. This was set up in the fort near Bayānā in Mālava year 428 (CE 371–72). Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 253 (line 3): *kṛtau puṇḍarīke yūpo*[*]*yam pratiṣṭhāpitas*.
88. V. S. Pathak, "Notes on Gupta Coinage," *JNSI* 19 (1957): 142–44. The argument elaborates that first put forward in A. B. Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School entitled Taittiriya Sanhita*, 2 vols. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 18–19 (Cambridge, 1914): 2: 439. Both cite Bhāskara's commentary, but I cannot pretend to understand how this "tends to show that *utsanna* is not used in the derivative sense of 'interrupted' or even 'rare.' It probably means elaborate." Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, 126, follows Keith and Pathak.

89. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 187.
90. *Mahābhārata, Ādiparvan*, edited by V. S. Sukthankar, 2 pts. (Poona, 1933) 1: 202: 21–26. Translation here from van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata: 1. The Book of the Beginning*, 395.
91. *BhG* (1: 44): *utsannakuladharmāṇāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ janārdana | narake niyataṃ vāso bhavatīty anuśuśruma.*
92. Gonda, "Pratiṣṭhā," p. 349.
93. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 and translation, p. 14; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 213 whose translation on p. 217 is misguided; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 266 (line 23): *anekabhraṣṭarājyotsannarājavaṃśapratiṣṭhānikhilabhuvanavicaraṇaśāntayaśaḥ.*
94. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 323 (line 14): *pracalitaṃ vaṃśaṃ pratiṣṭhāpya.*
95. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 22ff.
96. For which royal cult, see Section 1.11.
97. Siwanī copper-plates, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 245 (lines 1–2): *agniṣṭomāptoryyāmokthya-ṣoḍaśyātirātravājapeyabṛhaspatisavasādyaskracaturaśvamedhayājinaḥ*, "who celebrated the *agniṣṭoma, aptoryāma, ukthya, ṣoḍaśin, ātirātra, vājapeya, bṛhaspatisava, sādyaskra* and four *aśvamedha*-s." The same list is given in the Chammak copper-plates, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 241, where commentary is given. It may be possible to trace the textual source based on omissions, a problem left for a future investigation.
98. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 295.
99. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 246 (lines 19–20): *maudgalyasagotrāya | taittiri-*(read: *rī*) *yāyāddhvaryyave devaśarmmācāryyāya.*
100. For example Mirashi, CII 5, pp. 65–67; Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, p. 91. Vājasaneyins are found also in charters from Orissa and Andhra.
101. Julius Eggeling, *The Satapatha-brâhmana, according to the Text of the Mâdhyandina School*, SBE vols. 12, 26, 41 and 44 (Oxford, 1882–1900) 44: 333–34. W. Caland, "Corrections of Eggeling's Translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa," *BSOS* 6 (1931): 297–302.
102. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (13: 3: 3: 6). Eggeling, SBE, vol. 44: 333–34.
103. *Taittirīyasaṃhitā*, edited by E. Roer, E. B. Cowell et al., *Bibliotheca Indica*, 6 vols. (Calcutta, 1860–99), 5: 110: *saṃkṛtyai acchāvākasāmaṃ bhavaty utsannayajño vai eṣa yad aśvamedhaḥ kas tad vedety āhur yadi sarvo vai kriyate na vā sarvaḥ iti yat saṃkṛti acchāvākasāmaṃ bhavaty aśvasya sarvatvāya.* A translation is given in A. B. Keith, *Veda of the Black Yajus School*, 2: 439.
104. Sāyaṇa *ad Taittirīyasaṃhitā* (5: 4: 12: 7): *yo 'yam aśvamedhaḥ kratuḥ so 'yaṃ vinaṣṭayajñāvayavair bahubhir avayavair upetatvāt kṛtsnyo 'yam avayavasaṅghātaḥ kriyate kvacit kiñcid avayavo 'tivismṛto vā iti ko nāma loke vetti.*
105. There are no charters in favour of Taittirīyas in the north; however, the eighth-century poet Bhavabhūti, who hailed from central India, claimed to be a scion of a family of teachers of the Taittirīya *śākhā*; see Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 52; Swati Datta, *Migrant Brāhmaṇas*, 157. For the myth explaining the school's name, See Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 325. The Vājasaneyins appear as donees in Parivrājaka, Uccakalpa, Maitraka, and Vākāṭaka charters. Excepting grants in areas ruled by these subordinate kings, the Gupta data are sparse: we have mention of the Rāṇāyanīyas, one of the *śākhā*-s of the *Sāmaveda*, for which Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 70; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 310; and Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 318. The school is mentioned coincidentally in the grant, the purpose being the establishment of an endowment for a sun temple. A second grant also mentions a *paṇḍita* of the *Sāmaveda*, without a specific school being named, for which Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 275. The Vājasaneyins are mentioned in the Sultanpur grant from Bengal,

dated Gupta year 121, see Niradbandhu Sanyal, "Sultanpur Copper-Plate Inscription," *EI* 31 (1955–56): 57–66.

106. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 89; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 340; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335 (lines 4–5): *svakarmmābhiratasya kratuyāji*[*naḥ*] *adhītasvādhyāyasya viprarṣer mmaittrāyaṇīyavṛṣabhasyendraviṣṇoḥ*. Also at Eran is a slightly later inscription on the large Varāha image belonging to the time of the Hūṇa king Toramāṇa, which again mentions Indraviṣṇu and uses the same phrases to describe him: Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 159 (line 3). The ancient seat of the Maitrāyaṇīyas is tangential to our present concerns, but the Bonda Plates of the Pāṇḍuvaṃśī king Mahāśiva Tīvara record a grant to Maitrāyaṇīya brāhmaṇas, among them Avanti Vikramopādhyāya and Lāṭa Phalihasvāmin. The names at least show that Maitrāyaṇīyas migrated in the sixth century to south Kośala from Avanti (= Mālwa) and Lāṭa (= Gujarāt). Sircar, "Bonda Plates of Mahasiva Tivara, Year 5," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 116.

107. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335 (lines 4–5): *kratuyāji*[*naḥ*] *adhītasvādhyāyasya viprarṣer*. The phrase *adhītasvādhyāya* has a technical sense: "he whose [Vedic] study is complete." Compare ibid., 476 (line 4): *śākhām adhītya*; also used in *Nītisāra* (1: 3) cited above. On *svādhyāya* and *prayoga*, see Smith, *Vedic Sacrifice in Transition*, 6.

108. *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā*, edited by Leopold von Schroeder, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1881–86; repr. Wiesbaden, 1970–72), reviewed in L. Rocher, *JAOS* 92 (1972): 571–72, *JAOS* 97 (1977): 368–69 and W. Rau, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 69 (1974): 585–87; supplements and corrections in M. Mittwede, *Textkritische Bemerkungen zur Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*, Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien 31 (Stuttgart, 1986) and T. N. Dharmadhikari, 'Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā,' in *Vedic Texts: A Revision, Prof. C. G. Kashikar Felicitation Volume*, edited by T. N. Dharmadhikari et al. (Delhi, 1990): 1–9. For the school's history and so on, see von Schroeder, op. cit., 4: xix-xxviii, and von Schroeder, "Über die Maitrâyaṇî Saṃhitâ, ihr Alter, ihr Verhältnis zu den verwandten Çâkhâ's, ihre sprachliche und historische Bedeutung," *ZDMG* 33 (1879): 177–207; Louis Renou, *Les écoles védiques et la formation du Veda*, Cahiers de la Société asiatique, no. 9 (Paris, 1947): 155–58; 199–203; Gonda, *Vedic Literature*, 327; Gonda, *Ritual Sūtras*, 525–27. As far as the name of the school goes, Witzel, "Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools," 315, n. 305, suggested that "the Maitrāyaṇīya seem to have received their name from/because of the patronage of the local Maitraka dynasty of Gujarat. Their older name was Kalāpaka (e.g. in Patañjali, *Mahābhāṣya*)." The second part of this interpretation, based on von Schroeder's conjecture in *ZDMG* 33 (1879): 202, was rejected by Renou and Gonda; the first part cannot be sustained given the Eran pillar inscription, cited earlier. This names the Maitrāyaṇīyas in CE 484 and this predates the first Maitraka record of CE 501–02, for which Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 426–29. So it is more plausible that the dynasty took its name from the Maitrāyaṇīyas to whom they may have extended patronage. But the complete absence of a connection is more likely: Maitraka grants to Maitrāyaṇīyas are relatively few, Njammasch, *Bauern, Buddhisten und Brahmanen*, 313, and this school is not mentioned in Maitraka records until a grant of Dhruvasena I, dated CE 536, see H. G. Shastri et al., "Ghunaḍā (Khānpar) Plates of the Maitraka King Dharasena II [sic!], (Valabhī) Year 217," *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 22 (1972): 83 (line 20). Moreover one of the pupils of Lakuleśa was called Mitra and his followers were called Maitraka. As the Maitrakas were predominantly worshippers of Śiva, the dynastic name probably come from this source; Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, 17–19; Ashvini Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, 257.

109. *Mānavaśrautasūtra*, edited by van Gelder with translation appearing as J. M. van Gelder, *The Mānavaśrautasūtra belonging to the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* (Delhi, 1963). Also see C. G. Kashikar, "Mānava Śrautasūtra," in *Vedic Texts: A Revision*, edited by T. N. Dharmadhikari, pp. 98–114. More condensed is the *Vārāhaśrautasūtra*, edited by W. Caland and Raghu Vira (Lahore, 1933) and C. G. Kashikar, *Vārāhaśrautasūtra* (Pune, 1988). For the two *pariśiṣṭa*-s of this *sūtra*, see Raghu Vira, "The Chandonukramaṇī of the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā," *JRAS* (1932): 547–53 and Raghu vira, "Gonāmika: One of the Newly Discovered Pariśiṣṭas of the Maitrāyaṇīyas," *Journal of Vedic Studies* 1 (1934): 6–12. For the *gṛhya*-texts of the two schools, M. J. Dresden, *Mānavagṛhyasūtra: A Vedic Manual of Domestic Rites* (Groningen, 1941) and Pierre Rolland, *Le Vārāhagṛhyasūtra* (Aix-en-Provence, 1971) and Rolland, *Le Vārāhagṛhyapuruṣa et autres extraits des Vārāhapariśiṣṭa, à caractère domestique* (Aix-en-Provence, 1975).

110. *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* (3: 2: 9): *utsannayajño vā eṣa yad agniś cityaḥ* etc. For translation, See Keith, *Veda of the Black Yajus School*, 2: 418. The word *utsanna* is also used in *MaiS* (1: 11: 6) in connection with the Vājapeya. Keith argues (*Black Yajus School*, p. 418, n. 2) against Sāyaṇa that *ustanna* means "elaborate" or "extended" based on his earlier, "The Meaning of utsannayajña," *ZDMG* 66 (1912): 729–31. Nonetheless, he admits his gloss is contrary to ordinary usage. A semantic shift may have occurred, but the point here is that only the ordinary meaning in Gupta-period Sanskrit is relevant.

111. The meaning *siddha*- suggested but not discussed in Lindquist, "Kings, Horses and the Aśvamedha Coin-type," 106. I am grateful to Joe Cribb for reminding me of the importance of the coins in this regard. For ramifications of the meaning, see note 175 in this chapter.

112. van Buitenen, *The Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad: A Critical Essay, with Text, Translation and Commentary* (The Hague, 1962) (1: 1): *sa pūrṇaḥ khalu vā addhāvikalaḥ saṃpadyate yajñaḥ*.

113. For the date, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 89; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 339; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 334 (line 3). Gupta years are expired and the reckoning started on Caitra śudi 1; for the details see note 36 in Chapter 1. For calculations regarding the length of generations, see R. C. Majumdar, "Jodhpur Inscription of Pratihara Bauka; V.S. 894," *EI* 18 (1925–26): 89, n. 3. The Eran pillar inscription lists Indraviṣṇu, Varuṇaviṣṇu, Hariviṣṇu, and Mātṛviṣṇu. Evidently Mātṛviṣṇu was advanced in years by the time of the Budhagupta pillar inscription because in the slightly later inscription of Toramāṇa, which see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 159 (line 3), he is dead (*svargata*) and the record made by his younger brother Dhanyaviṣṇu. In the Budhagupta inscription, Dhanyaviṣṇu is mentioned already, suggesting he was acting as some kind of regent in 484. Thus, for dates we cannot be far wrong to suggest: Indraviṣṇu (fl. circa 403), Varuṇaviṣṇu (fl. circa 429), Hariviṣṇu (fl. circa 455) and Mātṛviṣṇu (fl. circa 480). Three ancestors seem to be named by analogy with the requirements of *śraddha* in which ancestors are invoked to the third generation; the inscriptions may also have been composed by analogy with *Mānavaśrautasūtra* (11: 8: 1: 1): "He mentions one, two, three (ancestors), he does not mention four and not more than five." This is the *Pravara* chapter of the *Śulbasūtra*.

114. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 (line 5): *kṛtsnapṛthivīvijayārthena;* the ceremonial conquest of the regions has been discussed in Chapter 1.

115. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 83.

116. Ibid., 115, n. 8. The rebirth of the king is explained in Section 1.11, with additional points in Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 118.

117. Ibid., 115. These terms refer to Soma's glory, Agni's brilliance, the sun's lustre, Indra's power, the strength of Mitra and Varuṇa, and the force of the Maruts. The Maitrāyaṇīya *kratu-* is of the Viśvedevas.
118. Hans Bakker kindly pointed out to me that the Varuṇa figures are shown holding the containers in a particular way, as if about to pour out the unction fluid. Personal communication, November 2005.
119. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8 (line 26).
120. Böhtlingk and Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, s.v. *dyumna*.
121. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 269 (lines 7–18): *suvarṇṇadāne* [*saṃvā**]*ritā nṛpatayaḥ pṛthurāghavādyāḥ*. The several Purāṇic sacrifices to which the Eran inscription alludes are summarised in Petteri Koskikallio, "The Horse Sacrifice in the Pātālakhaṇḍa of the Padmapurāṇa," in *Composing a Tradition*, 228.
122. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1982): 222; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 269 (lines 14–16): [*yo**] *rājaśabdavibhavair abhiṣecanādyaiḥ* [|*].
123. *Mānavaśrautasūtra* (7: 1: 3: 17) within the *vājapeya*. The comparison of the king's steps with those of Viṣṇu appears again in the enthronement sequence of the *rājasūya* in the *Vārāhaśrautasūtra*, see Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 141.
124. *Mānavaśrautasūtra* (7: 1: 3: 20): *vyākhyāto 'bhiṣekaḥ*. Within the *rājasūya*, identical phrases are used after the *yajamāna* has descended the sacrificial pole, *Mānavaśrautasūtra* (7: 1: 3: 17–20).
125. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 269 (line 9): *dhanadāntakatuṣṭikopatulyaḥ*.
126. Ibid., 1: 269: [*bhūvāsa**]*vo nṛpatir aprativāryyavīryyaḥ*. For the reconstructed word, we follow Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1982): 222 (line 16).
127. Ibid., 1: 269 [*śrīr a**]*sya pauruṣaparākkramadattaśulkā* [*hastya**] *śvaratnadhanadhānyasaṃṛddhiyuktā*. Sircar restores the name of Samudragupta's queen: *dattāsya*, but this could only be part of a name. We follow Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1982): 222 (line 17).
128. Cited in Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 77.
129. Cunningham, *ASIR* 10 (1874–76): 89. Illustrated in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Plate 125.
130. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 20. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1982): 222, suggest that line 26 of the record be restored *devālayaś ca kṛtinātra janārdanasya* so that the object of the record was the making of a temple of Janārdana (i.e., Kṛṣṇa). This is based on Mātṛviṣṇu's pillar at the site which describes itself as a *dhvaja* of Janārdana: *janārddanasya dhvajastambho* ['*]*bhyucchritaḥ*, Bhandarkar et al., ibid. 341, (line 9). The unstated logic of Bhandarkar's argument is that a pillar of Janārdana should have stood before a temple of Janārdana. The fact that the opening of Mātṛviṣṇu's inscription refers to Viṣṇu as four-armed (*caturbhujaḥ*) would appear to support the association of the Samudragupta inscription with the colossal Viṣṇu that indeed has four arms. Bhandarkar pursued the implications to their logical end, but his reconstruction does not bear scrutiny. The closing lines of the pillar inscription, in the first place, do not mention Janārdana but Varāha and Nārāyaṇa (the text is given in Chapter 1, note 117). Moreover, the colossal four-armed Viṣṇu does not belong to the fourth century; it is rather a tenth-century replacement of a late fifth-century original. This is why Harle did not take up the image in *Gupta Sculpture*. Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, despite noting the sculpture's "physical problems" (p. 91), was deceived by the copy.
131. See Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 19 and 21, n. 4.
132. Illustrated in K. D. Bajpai, *Sagar through the Ages* (Sagar, 1964). One sculpture, broken in two parts, was in situ in the early 1980s, but has since disappeared.

133. R. D. Bhatt, "Some Interesting Coins from Madhya Pradesh," *Numismatic Studies* 2 (1992): 40 and Plates 4 a–b. A miniature example in ivory was found at Chandraketugarh and is now in the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta.
134. Discussed in Chapter 1 and explored in Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," 39–41.
135. Mohanlāl Śarmā, *Padmāvatī* (Bhopal, 1971); H. V. Trivedi, *The Nāga Coins of Padmāvatī* (Gwalior, 1957).
136. See my *Inscriptions of Gopakṣetra*, 118–19. There are also inscribed bricks bearing the names of Vaiṣṇava donors.
137. S. W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife* (Oxford, 1996). On the *yūpa*, Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, 81–84; Minkowski, *Priesthood in Ancient India*, 153–54; thanks are due to Prof. Minkowski for commenting on the relief (personal communication November 2005). Also see T.N. Proferes, "Installation of the Sacrificial Post," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 317–50.
138. So also one of several paradigmatic signs of a priest in the Tāḷagunda inscription, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 476 (line 5): *kuśasamiddṛśatsrugājyacarugrahaṇādidakṣeṇa pāṇinā*, "with hand dexterous in grasping the *kuśa*-grass, fuel and stones, ladle, clarified butter and oblation vessel."
139. Brockington, *Sanskrit Epics*, 237.
140. For the charters and Sanskrit, see Chapter 2, note 41.
141. The Nāgouri horse is shown on the map in Marshall, *Monuments of Sanchi*, 2: Plate 1 as "Dang-kī ghōṛī," the word *dang* meaning "jungle" in local language. The sculpture noted also in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 25, n. 17.
142. E. Neumayer, *Lines on Stone* (Delhi, 1993): 205, Figure 550; another interpretive drawing of the painting in Shaw, *Buddhist Landscapes*, 111, Figure 11.3.
143. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335 (lines 6–7): *bhagavadbhaktena vidhātur icchayā svayaṃ varayeva rājalakṣmyādhigatasya*. Also in the Toramāṇa inscription: ibid., 421 (lines 4–5).
144. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 114 (lines 3–5): *caturddaśavidyāsthānaviditaparamārthasya kapilasy*[e*]*va maharṣeḥ sarvvatat*[t*]*vajñasya bharaddvājasagotrasya nṛpatiparivrājakasuśarmaṇaḥ*. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 394. This is the Kho copper-plate of Saṃkṣobha dated CE 528–29, which shows, like the Eran inscription, that claims to brāhmaṇical authority and high descent appear at a late stage, as does the process of Sanskritisation in the Parivrājaka charters.
145. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 115, n. 8, defines this as "the four Vedas, the six Vedāṅgas, the Purāṇas, the Mīmāṃsā system of philosophy, the Nyāya system and Dharma, or law." The Kapila referred to in the inscription was the legendary founder of the Sāṃkhya system who is often identified with Viṣṇu.
146. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 25, 66, 217.
147. Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, 41.
148. On the question of "tribes," see Parasher, *Mlecchas in Early India*, 179. For the tribe as a category in social anthropology, André Béteille, "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India," in *Society and Politics in India* (London, 1991), first published in *European Journal of Sociology* 27 (1986): 297–318; F. G. Bailey, "'Tribe' and 'Caste' in India," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 5 (1961): 7–19.
149. See Chapter 1, note 128.
150. See Batakrishna Ghosh, *Collection of the Fragments of Lost Brāhmaṇas* (Calcutta, 1935; Reprint Delhi, 1982): 106–07 and Renou, *Écoles védiques*, 131 and 171. A useful overview of the *śākhā*-s is Ganga Sagar Rai, 'Śākhās of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda in the Purāṇas', *Purāṇa* 7 (1965): 235–53.
151. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 4: 302.

152. S. P. Tewari, *Cultural Heritage of Personal Names and Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi, 1982): for example p. 84 citing *Raghuvaṃśa* (18.10).
153. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 289–90 (line 4): [*c*]*chānd*[*o*]*g*[*y*]*ācā*[*ryyāśva*]*vājisag*[*o*]*ttra*. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. *mahābalādhikṛta*. Members of Pṛthivīṣeṇa's family earlier held the position of *mantrikumārāmatya*.
154. Goyal, *Imperial Guptas*, 70–81. Developed more carefully in Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, 83–84.
155. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 12.
156. Ibid., p. 11.
157. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 436 (lines 7–8): *duhitā dhāraṇasagotrā nāgakulasambhūtāyā*[*ṃ**]; ibid., p. 439 (lines 7–8): *duhitā dhāraṇasagotrā nāgakulotpannāyā*[*ṃ**].
158. M. G. Dikshit, "Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 24," *EI* 31 (1955–56): 263–66 with reply Sircar, "Note on Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 24," *EI* 31 (1955–56): 267–68. Also Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 29. A dynastic link to the Vidiśā region in these plates makes them especially applicable. Narendra was the son of Śarabha, and Śarabha was the maternal grandfather of Goparāja mentioned in the Eran inscription of 510, for which see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 92–93.
159. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 436, n. 9, where the matter is discussed in detail; Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 12, n. 17.
160. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 478 (line 12): *guptādipārthiva* etc. For dates we follow Sircar: Mayūraśarman, circa 330–60; Kākusthavarman, circa 410–55; Śāntivarman, circa 455–70.
161. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 95, n. 1; for the Udayagiri text, 35 (line 3). Fleet may have referred to *Amarakośa* (7: 41–42) while framing these observations. This was suggested to me by Fleet's personal copy of the 1896 edition that is dated in his own hand to October 1905 and has the word *ṛṣi* marked in the index. This evidence is of course after the fact; that is, CII 3 (1888), but it nonetheless indicates that Fleet was interested in Amarasiṃha's categories.
162. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 163.
163. T. W. Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda*, SBE, vol. 36 (Oxford, 1894): 147–48.
164. Raghavan, *Mudrārākṣasanāṭakakathā*, 69–70.
165. Ibid., 76.
166. Ibid., 16. The data are analysed in Sircar, "Indological Notes. 12 Derivation of the Clan or Family Name Maurya," *JAIH* 5 (1971–72): 242–47. Sircar, interested in isolating early historical fact, concludes that Maurya has nothing to do with the word for "peacock" and that *maurya* and *mauryaputra* really mean "a scion of the Maurya clan" in the earliest records (ibid., 244). Sircar is not interested in the rhetorical and ideological motivations of the later writers.
167. The same explanation is offered again in different words in *Mahābhārata* (3: 187: 3).
168. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 323 (lines 13–14): *paritoṣān mātaraṃ sāsranettrāṃ hataripur iva kṛṣṇo devakīm abhyupe*[*ta*]*ḥ*. See Section 1.5 for commentary.
169. As noted above in Section 1.10.
170. Bhattacharyya, *Indian Demonology*, 145, 187.
171. The analysis given here proven by *BhG* (9: 32–33): *māṃ hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpayorayaḥ | striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parāṃ gatim || kiṃ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā*. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the devoted *rājarṣi* must surely have been read as a direct reference to the Gupta king.
172. As noted in Section 1.8.
173. For the *yuga*-theory and changes in *dharma* according to each age, see Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, translated by J. D. M. Derrett (Berkeley, 1973): 183–89,

and Lingat, "Time and the Dharma," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 6 (1962): 7–16. Attempts have been made to read *yuga*-theory in socio-historical terms: B. N. S. Yadava. "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages" in *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*, edited by D. N. Jha (Delhi, 1987): 65–111, first published in *IHQ* 1–2 (1978–79): 31–63; also R. S. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis," ibid., pp. 45–64.

174. The reinstatement of *kṛtayuga* is repeatedly mentioned in the charters of Pravarasena II, see Jamb plates for the characteristic wording: Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 12–13 (lines 15–16). We return to this issue in greater detail in Section 3.6.
175. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 476 (line 4). We follow Sircar's suggestion regarding the meaning of *pallavāśvasaṃstha-*, "at the completion of the horse (sacrifice) of the Pallavas." What could have caused the dispute? The answer is money: *siddhi* in the next verse means "fortune," "recovery (of money)." This adds a further dimension to the letter *si* on the *aśvamedha* coins, a point already noted. The background is filled in by law texts: *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 82): *āvṛttānāṃ gurukulād viprāṇāṃ pūjako bhavet*, "The king should be the worshipper of brāhmaṇas returning from the homes of their *guru*-s," and *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (2: 314): *yajñāṃś caiva prakurvīta vidhivad bhūridakṣiṇān*, "He (the king) should perform sacrifices according to the rules, giving large presents." Trouble arose because the Pallava king did not show due respect and was parsimonious. The complexities surrounding the payment of *dakṣiṇā* and possible areas of dispute are given in *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (8: 206–13).
176. This view developed in Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*.
177. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 122–23 and 3: 39, gives some further examples and additional legal views.
178. Bühler, SBE, vol. 25: xix.
179. Kane, "13. Mānavadharmasūtra – Did it Exist?," in *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 1: 143–49. On the Maitrāyaṇīya affiliation, see S.W. Jamison, "A Sanskrit Maxim and its Ritual and Legal Applications," in *Anusantayai: Festschrift für Johanna Narten zum 70. Geburtstag*, Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, Beiheft 19, edited by, Almut Hintze and Eva Tichy (Dettelbach, 2000): 122–24, cited and endorsed in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 46. Also see von Schroeder, *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā*, xviii–xix. The closeness shown also by the Maitrāyaṇīya *śulba* which is a version of the Mānava. Both cover the same ground and many passages are identical although the arrangements differ.
180. Patrick Olivelle, "Manu and the Arthaśāstra: A Study in Śāstric Intertextuality," *JIP* 32 (2004): 281–91; further observations in Olivelle, *Manu's Law Code*, 47–49.
181. The date of the *MDh* has long been recognised to hinge on its relationship with the *Arthaśāstra*, see Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra and Juridical Literature*, 31–33 and Kangle, *Arthaśāstra*, 3: 80–83. Derrett summarises the features that show how Manu ingested the products of centuries but Derrett's date, "perhaps between 200 BC and 100 AD," is too early. Olivelle, *Manu's Law Code*, 19–25 gives a full summary of the evidence – mostly negative – for the text's date. But his final preference (ibid., 25) for a second to third-century date, in harmony with D. C. Sircar's third-century date, is based only on the assessment that "it is unlikely that the socio-political conditions during which the *MDh* was composed reflects those of the indigenous Gupta empire." It will be clear from the discussion in the previous chapter, and also from what follows, that many aspects of the *MDh* do indeed conform to early Gupta conditions (i.e., the conditions in the fourth century rather than the fifth).
182. Śabara cites *MDh* 8: 299 *ad Karmamīmāṃsāsūtra* (6: 1: 12), as noted in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 23. Śabara is taken up in greater detail in Section 2.5. For the

moment, we only note that he belonged to the Maitrāyaṇīyas and would thus have been familiar with the *MDh*. This is why he does not cite Manu by name but simply says *evaṃ smarati* (i.e., he is citing the law-book of his own school).

183. The epigraphic citation of Manu is given below in note 190. The reference to Manu in A. S. Altekar, "Nandsa Yupa Inscriptions," *EI* 27 (1947–48): 252–67 (line 13): *manunirviśeṣam iva* has not drawn the attention of textual commentators. Altekar's assignment of the date to Vikrama era is not correct, so the inscription does not actually give us a reference to Manu in the third century. The historical framework offered by Altekar is out of date, the palaeography of the inscription is subsequent to late Kuṣāṇa times and the cultural apparatus mentioned (temple building, endowments, etc.) belongs to the Gupta period.
184. Telang, SBE, vol. 8: 30. The Kālidāsa references are discussed again in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 23.
185. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 477 (line 8) and *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (12: 100) just cited.
186. In the Udayagiri inscription, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 (line 5). As shown in Section 1.11, the description of Amarasiṃha applies: *cakravartī sārvabhaumaḥ nṛpo 'nyo maṇḍaleśvaraḥ*.
187. See Sections 1.5 and 2.12.
188. Bühler, "Synopsis of Parallel Passages," SBE, vol. 25: 533–82; Patrick Olivelle, "Viṣṇu-Smṛti: Explorations in a Forgotten Dharmaśāstra," read at AOS: 250th Meeting, Philadelphia (19 March 2005). The detailed mapping of the textual relationships is beyond the scope of the present work; we are interested rather in the political and historical implications of these literary events.
189. This is discussed in Chapter 2, note 325.
190. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 165 (line 5): *manvādipraṇītavidhividhānadharmmā dharmmarāja iva*. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, 27, places Dronasiṃha circa CE 499–519.
191. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 328.
192. As discussed in Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State*, 86.
193. van Buitenen, *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.
194. Ibid., 7–8.
195. Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*, 107.
196. Othmar Gächter, *Hermeneutics and Language in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Delhi, 1983): 9–10, where scholarship on the date of Śabara is summarised.
197. Jean-Marie Verpoorten, *Mīmāṃsā Literature*, A History of Indian Literature, vol. 6, fasc. 5 (Wiesbaden, 1987): 9. In more detail with textual proofs, D. V. Garge, "Did Śabara belong to the Maitrāyaṇīya School of the Yajurveda?," *BDCRI* 4 (1943): 329–39.
198. Jaimni, *Mīmāṃsāsūtra, with the commentary of Śabarasvāmin*, edited by Maheśacandra Nyāyaratna, 2. vols. (Calcutta, 1863–89) 2: 139–46; for translation see Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1429–37, which we use here, the references below being to the volumes and page numbers in these editions.
199. The rhetorical and textual position of Śabara, which offers more historical difficulties than can be tackled here, have been addressed in Colas, "Competing Hermeneutics of Image Worship," 149–79. Sontheimer, "Religious Endowments," 50–53 also gives a summary of Śabara's view with different points of emphasis.
200. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1432. Śabara also deals with the related contention that the gods eat the essence of the food rather than the food itself, like bees take honey from flowers. Śabara will have none of this (ibid., 3: 1436): we actually see bees taking the essence of flowers, not so with gods and offerings. Furthermore, when offered food

becomes insipid, it is not because the god has taken the essence, but simply because the food has become cold and exposed to the air.

201. Ibid., 3: 1434.
202. Ibid., 3: 1434.
203. Ibid., 3: 1437; Śabara *ad* Jaimini, *Mīmāṃsasūtra* 2: 146: *iha tu karmmaṇy abhāvaḥ prativiḍhānasya | tasmād viṣamam atithinā*. That Śabara is criticising *pūjā* is shown by his characterisation of the opponent's views: Śabara *ad* Jaimini, *Mīmāṃsasūtra* 2: 145: *bhākta eṣa śabdaḥ*. While *bhākta* means "secondary" (as an antonym of *mukhya*, "principal, first") its connotations as an augmented form of *bhakta* was probably fairly obvious to readers in Śabara's time.
204. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1432.
205. Śabara *ad* Jaimini, *Mīmāṃsasūtra*, 2: 141; Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1433.
206. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1436.
207. Ibid., 3: 1433. On the early attempts at the definition of property and attendant difficulties, J. D. M. Derrett, "The Concept of Property in India, c. AD 800–1800," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* 64 (1962): 15–130. Derrett, however, is overly hasty (p. 94) in dismissing views outside the textual world dominated by Mīmāṃsā. Colas, "Competing Hermeneutics," 153, translates *devakṣetra* as "territory of the god," but goes on to say (p. 154) that this seems to be land donated to a temple. Charters from the Gupta period – the Dāmodarpur and Valkhā plates provide examples – show that what is being referred to by Śabara are plots of agricultural land.
208. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 3: 1436–37. Śabara *ad* Jaimini, *Mīmāṃsasūtra*, 2: 145: *tan na, pratyakṣāt pramāṇāt devatāparicārakāṇām abhiprāyaḥ*. Colas, "Competing Hermeneutics," 153–54 takes up the meaning of *devatāparicāraka* and Jhā's translation of this term. The copper-plates again help: the Valkhā charters mention those who propitiate the god (*devaprasādaka*) and the servants of the god who undertake ploughing and sowing (*devaparicārakaiḥ kṛṣyamāṇaṃ vapamānaṃ ca*). See discussion in Section 2.5. This leaves little doubt that Śabara is indeed describing temple endowment land and those who controlled it.
209. J. D. M. Derrett, *Bhāruci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, 1: 236–37; 2: 350. For Bhāruci's date, see ibid., 1: 9–10; he was from the south and a follower of Viśiṣṭādvaita, see especially ibid., 1: 33.
210. The nature of competence is brought out in Francis X. Clooney, "A Theological Debate," *JIP* 16 (1988): 279.
211. This position argued at the opening of Śabara's work, see Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 1: 87–97.
212. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 1: 87–89.
213. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 2: 1178. Śabara's thesis is summarised also in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 865–67.
214. This conclusion may also be read as a critique of the *bhūmidāna* ceremony described in *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 10 of which Śabara probably had knowledge. This details how an image of the earth was to be made and given away to a brāhmaṇa. Modak, *Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda*, 242–43.
215. Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, cited in full in Section 1.11.
216. Nīlakaṇṭha, *Vyavahāramayūkha*, edited and translated by Vishvanāth Nārāyan Mandlik, 2 parts (Bombay, 1880) 2: 35. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 865–66.
217. Jhā, *Shabara-Bhāṣya*, 1: 95.
218. For an exploration of other possible historical issues from the perspective of the priest, Sontheimer, "Religious Endowments," 59. In this framework, I am inclined to regard

*Āpastambadharmasūtra* as a relatively late work, reformed against the complex accretions of *Baudhāyana*, a point already made for other reasons in Chapter 2.

219. For Śaṅkara and his *digvijaya*, see Angelika Malinar, "Śaṅkara as Jagadguru according to Śaṅkara-Digvijaya," in *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*, edited by Vasudha Dalmia et al. (Oxford, 2001): 93–112.
220. Śrīharṣa, *Naiṣadhīyacaritam*, edited by Nārāyāṇa Rāma Ācārya with extracts from the commentaries of Mallinātha et al. (Mumbai, 1952): 210 (5: 39): *viśvarūpakalanād upapannaṃ tasya jaimnimunitvam udīye*. The commentaries explain the pun, and there is no need to replicate this here.
221. Cited in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 842. Vijñāneśvara belonged to the early decades of the twelfth century.
222. The importance of the dative is brought out in Clooney, "A Theological Debate," 283.
223. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 122 (lines 6–11); see his translation p. 123.
224. *Aitreyabrāhmaṇa* (39: 7): *na mā martyaḥ kaścana dātum arhati viśvakarmanbhauvana māṃ didāsitha | nimaṃkṣeham salilasya madhye moghas ta eṣa kaśyapāyāsa saṅgaraḥ*. A variant also in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (13: 7: 1: 13–15). Viśvakarman, the builder of all, is the "architect of creation" but, to drive the nail completely home, even he cannot give away the earth.
225. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 35 (line 5).
226. Ibid., 35 (line 2). The term *avakraya* is used in *Arthaśāstra* (3: 8: 24 and 3: 20: 10) to indicate the payments of rents and debts. The term, which appears in *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (2: 20: 228) in the sense of "hiring out," is explained in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 3: 494: "An *avakraya* becomes valid after possession over three generations and a (regular) purchase by mutual agreement becomes valid at once."
227. Medhātithi *ad Mānavadharmaśāstra* (3: 152), probably basing himself on Śabara *ad* Jaimini 2: 145, discussed previously. Phyllis Granoff, "Reading between the Lines: Colliding Attitudes towards Image Worship in Indian Religious Texts," in *Rites Hindous*, 389–421, explores the tensions that emerged as attempts were made to harmonise image-worship to orthodoxy. An introductory overview is provided in Richard Davis, "Image Worship and its Discontents," in *Representation in Religion: Studies in Honor of Moshe Barasch*, edited by J. Assmann and A. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2001): 107–32.
228. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, 75.
229. Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 5 (1876): 177 (lines 10–11): *tatrājñaptiḥ mūlakarabhojakā*, "the command confers the enjoyment of the original (royal) taxes there," this after the grant says in line 7 *grāmaṃ prattaḥ*. In the closing imprecation, Sagara is not mentioned, thereby side-stepping the Mīmāṃsaka assertion that the earth could not be given away because the king does not have title to it. The nature of Mīmāṃsā before Śabara, much beyond the scope of the present work, is taken up in Francis X. Clooney, *Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini* (Vienna, 1990).
230. Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 90.
231. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2: 842.
232. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (8: 39): *nidhīnāṃ tu purāṇānāṃ dhātūnām eva ca kṣitau | ardhabhāgrakṣaṇād rājā bhūmer adhipatir hi saḥ*.
233. *Arthaśāstra* (2: 1: 1–18).
234. Mirashi, CII 4 (1955): 1: 24 *bhagavatpādakarmmakaro* ['*]*śvamedhāharttā śrīmahārāja dahrasenaḥ*.

235. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 340–45; P. L. Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, 1: 47. The Gunaighar charter, dated Gupta year 188 (CE 507–08), is discussed and translated above in Section 2.12.
236. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (2: 331–33) ed. Miśra, 148, v. 332: *ṛtvikpurohitācāryair ad Mitākṣarā: purohitartvigācāryādibhir rāsībhir abhinandito. Arthaśāstra* (1: 19: 23) *aṣṭama ṛtvigācāryapurohitasvastyayanāni pratigṛhṇīyāt | cikitsakamāhānasikamauhūrtikāṃś ca paśyet*. This inspired Inden, "Changes in the Vedic Priesthood," 564, to suggest that the figures were ranked: *ṛtvij* at the top followed by the *ācārya* and *purohita*. The analysis given here suggests rather that they were in competition with the king mediating. This helps explain why the appointment of other priests, but not the *ācārya*, is taken up in the *Arthaśāstra* and *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*. The *Mānavadharma* (7: 78) too has nothing to say. Because the *ācārya* dealt with theistic knowledge that was *rahasya*, as I shall attempt to show in this section, and because he did not belong to traditions of polity and law, his appointment was not the proper business of those texts; indeed, the traditionalists would have regarded the *ācārya*'s innovations with suspicion. The king, therefore, seems to have appointed his *ācārya* directly, without reference to ritual or legal experts.
237. *Arthaśāstra* (1: 19: 31): *agnyagāragataḥ kāryaṃ paśyed vaidyatapasvināṃ | purohitācāryasakhaḥ pratyutthāyābhivādhya ca.*
238. *AŚ* 5: 3: 3; *AŚ* 2: 4: 8.
239. *Mānavadharmaśāstra with the commentaries of Medhātithi and others*, ed. Vishvanāth Nārāyan Mandlik; Medhātithi ad 2: 140: *kalpaśabdaḥ sarvāṅgapradarśanārthaḥ, rahasyam upaniṣadaḥ.*
240. The ritual is summarised in Bakker, "At the Right Side of the Teacher," 118–19; further details in Gonda, "The Guru," 236. For a comprehensive overview, see B. K. Smith, "Ritual, Knowledge and Being: Initiation and Veda Study in Ancient India," *Numen* 33 (1986): 65–89.
241. *MDh* (2: 148): *ācāryas tv asya yāṃ jātiṃ vidhivad vedapāragaḥ | utpādayati sāvitryā sā satyā sājarāmarā.*
242. Gonda, "The Guru," 241; also V. S. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini* (Lucknow, 1953): 282; B. N. Puri, *India in the Time of Patañjali* 2nd edition (Bombay, 1968): 144–45; Minoru Hara, "Hindu Concepts of Teacher, Sanskrit *guru* and *ācārya*," in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies*, edited by M. Nagatomi et al. (Dordrecht, 1980): 93–118. For some of the later developments, see Jörg Gengnagel, "The Śaiva Siddhānta Ācārya as Mediator of Religious Identity," in *Charisma and Canon*, 77–92.
243. *VSm* (32: 1): *trayaḥ puruṣasyātiguravo bhavanti pitā mātācāryaś ca.*
244. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (2: 149): *alpaṃ vā bahu va yasya śrutasyopakaroti yaḥ | tam apīha guruṃ vidyāc chrutopakriyayā tayā.* Translation in Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law*, 102.
245. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 475 (line 4): *pallavendrapurīṃ guruṇā samaṃ vīraśarmmaṇā adhijigāṃsuḥ.*
246. Ibid., 1: 476 (line 4): *gurukulāni samyag ārāddhya śākhām adhītyāpi yatnataḥ.* Paralleling *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (7: 82).
247. *Atharvaveda* (11: 5: 3) *ācārya upanayamāno brahmacāriṇaṃ kṛṇute garbhamanthaḥ.*
248. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1931): 8–9.
249. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 70–71.
250. Translation from Olivelle, *Early Upaniṣads*, 433. Similar instructions reappear as editorial interpolations in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (6: 29).
251. On the matter of *dīkṣā*, the student must consult the characteristically able discussion in Gonda, "Dīkṣā," in *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 315–462. For

*dīkṣa* undergone by Vaikhānasa temple-priests, see Colas, "The Re-working of 'Vedic' Paradigms," in *Les ressources de l'histoire*, 41–44; for later material, outside the geographical and chronological scope of this study, see Dominic Goodall, "Initiation et délivrance : selon le Śaiva Siddhānta," in *Rites Hindous*, 93–116; Sanderson, "Religion and State."

252. K. B. Pathak, "Poona Plates of the Vakataka Queen Prabhavati-Gupta, the 13th Year," *EI* 15 (1925): 41–42; Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 7–8; summary in Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*, 9. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 435–38 (line 14): *bhagavadbhaktācāryyacanālasvāmine*. The name is not entirely clear, but I am unable to suggest a better reading.
253. *Viṣṇudharmāḥ*, edited by Grünendahl, 1: 107 (7: 27): *brāhmaṇām bhojanaṃ dadyāt tatas tebhyaś ca dakṣiṇām*. Gifts were normally made on the morning following the fast; see, for example, ibid., 33, a practice that explains the day given in the Poona charter.
254. The Māṇḍhal plates are dated in the fifth year of Rudrasena II. Summary of contents in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 18–21 with edition of the text in Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekar Gupta, "Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, Year 5," *ABORI* 78 (1997): 143–57. Illustrations are very poor; slightly better ones are provided in Shastri, *Vākāṭakas*. The difficulties surrounding the terms used to describe the different strands of early Vaiṣṇava religious thought are introduced in Peter Schreiner, ed., *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*, 5–6. The word "Vaiṣṇava" can be used as it is found in a fifth-century inscription, albeit from South East Asia: *sa paramaṁ gacchet padaṃ vaiṣṇavam*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 512 (line 19).
255. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 59–65, on which I have freely drawn for the account given here.
256. *Mahābhārata* (12: 336: 31), cited and contextualised in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 60; a formative analysis can be found in R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Poona, 1928): 6–17.
257. Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, 154.
258. These sculptures are discussed and illustrated in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 119–23.
259. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 270. For the meaning of *bhagavatpādopayojyam*, the "feet of the Lord," used in this record, see Chapter 2, note 77.
260. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 60.
261. This portion of the text analysed in James Laine, *Visions of God*, 191–201, but with more historical clarity in Oberlies, "Die Textgeschichte der Śvetadvīpa-Episode des Nārāyaṇīya," 75–115, with a robust reply in Grünendahl, "On the Frame Structure and 'Sacrifice Concept' in the Nārāyaṇīya and Tīrthayātrā Sections of the Mahābhārata, and the Craft of Citation," *ZDMG* 152.2 (2002): 309–40. The Toshām inscription provides an external referent confirming the generally accepted dating of the *Nārāyaṇīya* to the fourth or fifth century, for which see Schreiner, *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*, 1. For a dissenting view, see Hiltebeitel, "The Nārāyaṇīya and the Early Reading Communities of the Mahābhārata," 227, but this is not sustainable and critiqued in the same volume see *Between the Empires*, p. 259.
262. Cunningham, "Tusham," *ASIR* 5 (1872–73): 136–40. The later architecture is noted in Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Hiṣār-i Fīrūza: Sultanate and Early Mughal Architecture in the District of Hisar, India* (London, 1988): 111–14. Another *sattra* is documented in the Taleśvara plates, which record that Trāta Bhāripatiśarman was the leader of a temple-based community and a *mahāsattrapati*, the head a great *sattra*. Gupte, "Two Talesvara Copper Plates," 115 (line 6), 119 (lines 9–12). The *sattrapati*, a term used also in the Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (1: 36), is the head of a charitable organisation, not the lord of a sacrificial session in the Vedic sense, contra Gupte, ibid., and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, 306.

263. More details on the steps to Vāsudeva are given in *Mahābhārata* (12: 332: 13–18), cited and discussed in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 61.
264. *BhG* (10: 37): *vṛṣṇīnāṃ vāsudevo 'smi*; BhG (2: 45): *nistraiguṇyo bhava*; BhG (13: 2) *kṣetrajñaṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi*. Kṛṣṇa advocates a combination of *yoga* and action (BhG 2: 48) and repeatedly asserts that the final destiny of the human soul is him, for example, BhG 9: 25 and 9: 34; further instances are noted in Section 1.11. The relationship of the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *MBh* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* are explored in Malinar, "Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa: Aspekte der Gotteslehre des Nārāyaṇīya im Vergleich zur Bhagavad Gītā," in *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*, pp. 241–91.
265. Angelika Malinar, *Rajavidya: das königliche Wissen um Herrschaft und Verzicht Studien zur Bhagavadgita* (Wiesbaden, 1996). Reviewed by G. Bailey, *IIJ* 45 (2002): 59–75.
266. Caland, *Domestic Rules and Laws of the Vaikhānasa School*, xiv, n. 1. Mentioned again in Caland, *On the Sacred Books of the Vaikhānasas* (Amsterdam, 1928): 13–14. The literature on the school otherwise is extensive by Indological standards. Some key work has been cited in Chapter 2 to which can be added W. Caland, *Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra* (Calcutta, 1941). The *Dharmasūtra* section of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* was treated separately by Wilhelm Eggers, *Das Dharmasūtra der Vaikhānasas* (Göttingen, 1929) and K. Rangachari, *Vaikhānasadharmasūtra and Pravarakhaṇḍa*, Ramanujachari Oriental Institute Publications, Vol. 2 (Madras, 1930 [?]) with translation published as K. Rangachari, *Vaikhānasa Dharma Sūtra: Introduction, Translation and Notes with Tables of Pravaras* (Madras, 1930). Gonda provided the main analytical discussion after Caland: Jan Gonda, "Religious Thought and Practice in Vaikhānasa Viṣṇuism," *BSOAS* 40 (1977): 550–71; Gonda, *The Āghāra Ritual of the Vaikhānasas* (Torino, 1981); Gonda, "Some Notes on the Use of Vedic Mantras in the Ritual Texts of the Vaikhānasas," *IIJ* 14 (1972): 1–31. Also useful is the survey "Vaikhānasa Literature," in Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature*, 140–52. Most recently, we have the analyses of Colas, notably *Viṣṇu, ses images et ses feux*.
267. *Mānavaśrautasūtra* (10: 3: 1: 1–2): *vaiṣṇave yā prameyāya śulbavidbhiś ca sarvaśaḥ | saṃkhyātṛbhyaḥ pravaktṛbhyo namo bharanto ye mase | idaṃ bhūbhyā bhajāmahe yā no mānakṛtām iva | yajñiyaṃ mānam uttamaṃ vardhamānaṃ sve dame* | The reading uncertain, but this concerns the measuring of the ground for the piling-up of a fire-altar for Viṣṇu, which is "the best measuring for the sacrifice, growing in one's own abode," so a place for a domestic *homa* to Viṣṇu.
268. van Buitenen, *The Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, 68–70, for a summary of the teachings.
269. *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (4: 178): *yenāsya pitaro yātā yena yātāḥ pitāmahāḥ | tena yāyāt satāṃ mārgaṃ tena gacchan na riṣyati*.
270. Oberlies, "Gottesnamen, Opferkonzeptionen und Zeithorizonte in Teil I des Nārāyaṇīya," 139–56. Also see Colas, "Conceptions indiennes de yajña," in *Rites Hindous*, 365–66; Smith et al., "Sacrifice and Substitution," 197.
271. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 62, notes that, for reasons not satisfactorily explained, Sāmba was displaced by Āditya as the religion evolved. See, however, J. A. B. van Buitenen, "The Name 'Pañcarātra,'" *History of Religions* 1 (1962): 294, where he notes that devotion to Nārāyaṇa is said in *MBh* 12: 335 to have been proclaimed by the sun and called Sātvatamata. Udayagiri provides a setting for the change as an ancient centre of sun worship, see Dass and Willis, "Lion Capital," 32–34. In Besnagar not far from Udayagiri, where the Heliodorus pillar stands, there was an ancient Sātvata temple.
272. Andreas Bock-Raming, *Untersuchungen zur Gottesvorstellung in der älteren Anonymliteratur des Pāñcarātra* (Wiesbaden, 2002), reviewed in detail by Colas, *JAOS* 125

(2005): 133–37. Early Pañcarātra texts show a connection with Vaikhānasa theology, and although the relationship is not easy to define, the southern home of the Vaikhānasas points to a similar geographical compass for Pañcarātra. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, 41–42, provides a useful review of Pañcarātra's consistently contradictory explanations of itself and its founding theology, but read the conclusions with van Buitenen, "The Name 'Pañcarātra.'" Incidentally, the view put forward by Jaiswal and others that the Ekāntins constitute a separate *dharma* or school is unlikely. More probably the Ekāntins are Bhāgavatas in a penultimate spiritual state before complete *mokṣa*.

273. The terminology remains problematic, see Gérard Colas, "Sectarian Divisions according to the Vaikhānasāgama," in *The Sanskrit Tradition and Tantrism*, edited by T. Goudriaan (Leiden, 1990): 24–32. Colas cites texts in which the Bhāgavatas are distinguished from Pañcarātrins, which we would expect from the Gupta-period perspective.

274. The understanding helped by *BhG* (7:14): *daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī māma māyā duratyayā | mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṃ taranti te*, "For this miraculous world of my illusion which consists of the three *guṇa*-s is hard to escape: only those who resort to me overcome this illusion."

275. Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 86–87.

276. For the identification of Rāmagiri as Rāmtek, see ibid, 86. The mountain near Vidiśā is mentioned in *Meghadūta* (1: 25–26) and is discussed in Section 1.12. The verses merit reexamination and here I only note that the tendency to read *yaḥ paṇyastrīratiparimalodgāribhir nāgarāṇām uddāmāni prathayati śilāveśmabhir yauvanāni* in an exclusively erotic fashion devalues Kālidāsa and founders on the archaeology. Of course the royal enclave on the hilltop may have been a pleasure palace, but the only stone houses (*śilāveśma*, ad Sumativijaya *guphāgṛhaiḥ*) of courtesan women (*paṇyastrī*) are cave-shrines to the goddesses. The Gaṅgdhār inscription mentions *mātṝṇāṃ veśmātyugraṃ* and Skanda, whose images appear at Udayagiri adjacent to the goddesses, is a libertine (*svacchanda*) surrounded by damsels. For both points see Section 3.1.

277. Sircar, "Indological Notes: 7. Vidiśā Jain Image Inscriptions of Rāmagupta," *JAIH* 3 (1969–70): 145–51; Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 233; Bakker, "Theatre of Broken Dreams," 182, n. 9. That the right reading is Celū rather than Cella is shown by the letter *mū* in line 7 of the Indor copper-plate and the letter *lla* in line 7 of the Mandasor inscription of Naravarman, see Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): Plates XIV and XXX. The Durjanpur records are the same apart from the name of the Jinas. The creation of three images, as opposed to only one, is explained by later ritual practices that require a performance to be carried out several times in order for it to work. This helps explain the multiple images at Rāmgarh and other sites.

278. Read: *candrakṣamaṇācārya-*. The letter *mā* is damaged and there is a haplography due to the fact that one of the other inscriptions was the exemplar as noted by Bakker, "Theatre of Broken Dreams," 182, n. 9.

279. Read: *-ntyāḥ*.

280. Read: *satputtra-*.

281. The Jaina inscription at Udayagiri dates to the time of Kumāragupta, but the king's name is not mentioned. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 259. For the Jaina place in the imperial formations in early India, only now receiving attention, see Dundas, "An Imperial Religion? Jainism in its 'Dark Age,'" 394–95.

282. Gonda, "Dīkṣā," 437 and 445, notes that *upadeśa* refers to the instructions given at initiation.

283. Olivelle, *Early Upaniṣads*, 449: *satyena labhyas tapasā hy eṣa ātmā samyag jñānena brahmacaryeṇa nityam*. The definitive study of *tapas*, a subject in which van Buitenen had a keen interest, is Walter O. Kaelber, *Tapta Mārga: Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India* (Albany, 1989).
284. Ibid., 412–13; van Buitenen, *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, shows the story to be an accretion in the southern recension. The description of Bṛhadratha brings to mind the standing ascetic in the famous Māmallapuram relief, which confirms this imagery in the far south from at least the seventh century.
285. The text is given in Section 3.3. Sunda and Upasunda were descendants of the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, whose story is summarised in Section 1.5. For other instances, including Rāvaṇa, and an exploration of the motif, Pollock, "The Divine King in the Indian Epic," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 505–28. More generally, see Kaelber, *Tapta Mārga*.
286. Gonda, "Dīkṣā," 439. In the parallel Vaiṣṇava tradition, Clooney, "From Person to Person: A Study of Tradition in the *Guruparaṃparāsāra* of Vedānta Deśika's *Śrīmat Rahasyatrayasāra*" in *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, edited by Federico Squarcini (Firenze, 2005): 203–24.
287. This to address the point made about degraded castes of mothers in *Mānāvadharmaśāstra* (10: 5–6).
288. Gonda, "Dīkṣā," 445. For an epigraphic example of *upadeśa* as instruction in right conduct (i.e., that a king should make a land-grant), see F. Kielhorn, "Two Kadamba Grants," *EI* 6 (1900–2001): 19 (lines 19–20). Also in a Kadamba grant of Harivarman, Fleet, "Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions," *IA* 6 (1877): 30 (line 8).
289. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (60: 1–22). The text is given in Section 2.10.
290. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 512 (lines 16–17): *asyāṣṭame |[*]hni vicitrair upaveda-vedavedāṅgavidbhir amarapratimair dvijendraiḥ ||[*] saṃskāritasya kathitaṃ bhuvi cakratīrtthasvāmīti nāma vidadhuś śrutiṣu pravīṇāḥ || |9*], "On the eighth day, those conversant in *śruti*, lords of the twice-born, wondrous, the very image of the immortals, knowers of *Upaveda*, *Veda* and *Vedāṅga*, effected the completion (of the god) who is known on earth by the name Cakratīrthasvāmin."
291. Ibid., (lines 20–21): *viprair bhāgavatair anāthakṛpaṇais . . . sarvvair upayujyatāṃ*. The same conclusion reached from a story in the *Skandapurāṇa* by Granoff, "Image Worship in Indian Religious Texts," 394.
292. Sircar, "Inscriptions from Mandar Hill," 305 (lines 3–4): *pādamūla bhāradvāja-āradvājasagot[r]aviṣṇuśarmmaputrāryyaviṣṇ[udatta]syeda|ṃ*]. Mandārgiri is in Bihar, fifty kilometres south of Bhagalpur. Sircar has misunderstood the meaning of *pādamūla* in this inscription, and the record otherwise needs checking.
293. R. R. Halder, "The Sohawal Copper-Plate Inscription of Maharaja Sarvanatha – the Year 191," *EI* 19 (1927–28):129 (line 10).
294. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* 1: 348 (line 6).
295. See Chapter 2, note 263 for reading and discussion.
296. *AŚ* (1: 18: 9) where the prince is told to enrich himself by robbing the wealth of heretical foundations and temples except those used by brāhmaṇas learned in the Vedas (*śrotriyopabhogyaṃ devadravyaṃ vā*); the same recommendation again in *AŚ* (5: 2: 37).
297. *Bṛhatsaṃitā* (46: 15): *buddhvā devavikāraṃ śuciḥ purodhās tryahoṣitaḥ snātaḥ | snānakusumānulepanavastrair abhyarcayet pratimām*.
298. See van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata, 2. The Book of the Assembly Hall; 3. The Book of the Forest* (Chicago, 1975): 18–30. The prohibitions in *kaliyuga* that follow with regard to sacrifice are explored in Smith, *Vedic Sacrifice in Transition*, 38–40.

299. The compilation and dating of the *MBh* is taken up by Fitzgerald, "Negotiating the Shape of Scripture" in *Between the Empires*, 270–72 and 276. His view of the epic as a vision of reality as the personal deity Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa supporting royal action after the example of Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa is in accord with the understanding of the religious culture of the Gupta court set out in this book. For the historian, the only problem with Fitzgerald's exemplary study is that if the present *MBh* (as recovered in the critical edition) dates to the fourth or fifth century and if the Kuṣāṇa-period epic was different (as we know from the Spitzer MS), then it becomes difficult to understand why or how redactors working in Gupta times would have carried forward an "anti-Mauryan or anti-Aśokan" agenda (ibid., 259, 276). Fitzgerald offers virtually no extra-textual historical data for his analysis, which is surprising given that the post-Mauryan period is far from an historical blank. In fact, his "complex process of negotiation between some members of the brahmin elite of northern India and the putative new brāhmaṇya kṣatra whom those brahmins wished to coax into a mutually beneficial existence through invoking the 'Great' Bhārata," (ibid., 258) is a fitting description of the late Kuṣāṇa and early Gupta periods.
300. Mirashi, CII 5 (1963): 12 (lines 15–16): *śambhoḥ prasādadhṛti* [read: *ta*] *kārttayugasya;* the line repeated in ibid., 19 (lines 11–12); ibid., 24 (line 16).
301. Māliā copper-plate of Dharasena II, Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 165 (lines 9–10): *suviśuddhabhya* [read: *sva*] *caritodakaprakṣālitasakalakalikalāṅkaḥ . . . paramādityabhaktaḥ śrīmahārājadharapaṭṭas.*
302. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 44 (line 8): *kārttayugācārasaddharmavartmānuyāyina* [*ḥ**].
303. These sermons are usefully dealt with in Sullivan, *Vyāsa and the Mahābhārata*, 83–84 on which the present summary draws. For the Sāṃkhyan elements see van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (I)" *JAOS* 76 (1956): 153–57; van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (II)" *JAOS* 77 (1957): 15–25; van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (III)" *JAOS* 77 (1957): 88–107.
304. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 438 (line 17): *a[paśu]medhya-*.
305. Cited and translated in Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 69.
306. Text is given in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50. Another Gupta seal has also been found on the site, see *ARE* (1957–58): 14 (section A, number 15).
307. Colas, *Viṣṇu, ses images et ses feux: Les métamorphoses du dieu chez les vaikhānasa*, 110–11, 291.
308. *KāśS*, 162 (Chapter 55). This short chapter elegantly summarises the *niṣkala* and *sakala* levels of the divine: the undivided, subtle, and unmoving is Nārāyaṇa; the divisible, substantial and moving is Viṣṇu. The second is the "self of all the gods and brings forth the Fish and the other Incarnations;" it is a concrete support for worship suitable for those in the world. Worship without support (i.e., Nārāyaṇa who is Brahman worshipped as a person) is best left to hermits. The two levels are also found in Pañcarātra and in Śaivism; see Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 121–22, in which system the *liṅga* represents *niṣkala*, while images of various kinds represent *sakala*.
309. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, 141–45 (Chapters 47–49).
310. *KāśS*, 145: *pratyaṅgāni lakṣaṇayutaṃ kārayet*. The characteristics are listed in a few lines and constitute all the important parts of the image; this is the only attention given to the work of the craftsman who is overly lionised in Western historiography.
311. *KāśS*, 173 (Chapter 59). After the statement *devayajanaṃ kariṣyāmi*, the text states that this means the celebrant should worship in the temple and that the priests should undertake the consecration.
312. *KāśS*, 174 (Chapter 60). The craftsman has already made the eyes, but the *guru* opens them with holy invocations: *samantrakaṃ kuryāt*. The procedure of opening the

eyes is widespread, see Harting, *Selections from the Baudhayana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, pp. 65–6.

313. *KāśS*, 184.
314. *KāśS*, 195 (Chapter 68) here given in slightly abbreviated form.
315. The *VaiSS* is a *gṛhya*-text so has no *guru* or *yajamāna*, the roles being combined in the person of the Vaikhānasa priest. Other relationships between the *KāśS* and *VaiSS* are noted in Section 2.10.
316. *KāśS* (Chapter 20), full text given here in Section 2.10.
317. *Meghadūta* (2: 50): *bhujagaśayanād utthite śārṅgapāṇau śeṣān* etc. Full text is given in Section 1.4.
318. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (58: 33): *khaḍgagadāśarapāṇir dakṣiṇataḥ śāntidaś caturthakaraḥ | vāmakareṣu ca kārmukakheṭakacakrāṇi śaṅkhaś ca*, "the hands on the right (display) an arrow, club, sword and the fourth hand is bestowing peace; and on the left, a bow, shield, wheel and conch."
319. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 83; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 307 (line 22): *śaśineva nabho vimalaṃ kau[stu]bhamaṇineva śārṅgino vakṣaḥ*. This from the famous inscription of the silk-weaver's guild. The churning of the ocean, depicted first at Udayagiri, is told in *Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparvan* (Āstika), see van Buitenen, The *Mahābhārata: 1. The Book of the Beginning*, 74 for the *kaustubha* gem.
320. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 146; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 418 (line 2): *yasya kṣmā śārṅgapāṇer iva kaṭhinadhanurjyākiṇāṅkaprakoṣṭhaṃ bāhuṃ lokopakāravratasa-phalaparispandadhīraṃ prapannā*.
321. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 322 (lines 15–16); here the translation loosely following Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 317. The verse is commented on in Bakker, "Commemorating the Dead."
322. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 318 (lines 5–6): *r[āmatu]lyo dha[rmma]pa[ra]tayā*. The problem of the Rāma cult is contextualised, albeit with different conclusions than my own, in Hans T. Bakker, "A Hindu Response to Muslim Intrusion: Evidence of Early Forms of Devotion to Rāma," in *Bhakti in Current Research 1982–85, Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Noordwijkerhout 1985*, edited by M. K. Gautam and G. H. Schokker (Lucknow and Delhi, 2000): 69–87.
323. The text is given in Section 1.11.
324. BKB number 165 (AIIS photo number 75207). A ninth-century stone sculpture of Rāma from Badoh Pathārī, its head missing, is in the Gwalior Museum: S. R. Thakore, *Catalogue of Sculptures in the Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, M.B.* (Lashkar, n.d.): 15, number 9, not otherwise published.
325. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, Chapter 82 (p. 251).
326. Additional Rāma temple inscriptions are noted in Hans T. Bakker, "The Ramtek Inscriptions," *BSOAS* 52 (1989): 467–96 and Bakker, "A Hindu Response to Muslim Intrusion." Sheldon Pollock, "Rāmāyāṇa and the Political Imagination in India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (1993): 261–97 interprets (p. 270) the reference to Rāma in the Supiā as little more than a conventional formula. But "conventions" arise from established practice and because Supiā is the first example, Pollock's analysis is chronologically upside down.
327. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, Chapter 82 (p. 252).
328. For the king's pair of arms Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 54; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 323 (lines 14 and 15). That Kṛṣṇa is four-armed with wheel and club in his "normal" state is clearly shown in *BhG* (10: 45): *kirīṭinaṃ gadinaṃ cakrahastam icchāmi tvāṃ draṣṭum ahaṃ tathaiva | tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena sahasrabāho bhava viśvamūrte*.

Also in inscriptions, notably that on the Eran pillar, called a "victory pillar of Janārdana, i.e. Kṛṣṇa" (*janārddanasya dhvajastambha-*), and in which Viṣṇu is invoked as *caturbhuja-*, Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 335 (lines 1 and 9).

329. Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, p. 30; Bakker, "Reflections on the Evolution of Rāma Devotion in the Light of Textual and Archaeological Evidence." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für Indische Philospohie* 31 (1987): 9–42. Julia Shaw, "Ayodhya's Sacred Landscape: Ritual Memory, Politics and Archaeological Fact," *Antiquity* 74 (2000): 693–700. Drawing on Bakker's ideas, Pollock, "Rāmāyāṇa and the Political Imagination in India," 265, has proposed that the political use of Rāma was popularised in response to the upheavals engendered by the Islamic conquest. The argument has been subject to a detailed critique, see B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims* (Delhi, 1998). For the present purpose we only need note that Pollock discounts the Gupta evidence because it is pre-Islamic and so undermines his thesis.
330. Horne, a judge at Banāras, is mentioned in Cunningham, "14. Udaygiri or Udaygiri," 100 and 129 n.
331. Ibid., 100–03.
332. Ray Desmond, *The India Museum 1801–1879* (London, 1982). The India Museum collections are discussed in my "Sculpture from India" in *A. W. Franks: Nineteenth Century Collecting and the British Museum*, edited by Marjorie Caygill and John Cherry (London, 1997). When the East India Company was disbanded in 1857, the India Museum and its collections came under the jurisdiction of the India Office. The India Museum closed in 1878, and the antiquities were transferred to the British Museum in 1880; the Indian coins came to the British Museum from the India Office in 1882. The Horne sculptures are documented by the India Museum slip books, now held in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The sculpture discussed here was IM 11997, now BM Asia 1880. 17. One of the sculptures in the British Museum has a slip of paper pasted on the back which reads: "Bhitari 1864" which shows this to be the date of Horne's visit to the site.
333. The excavator's findings were published posthumously in Jayaswal, *Royal Temples of the Gupta Period*, 48–80. The finds are mostly kept in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Benares Hindu University.
334. See Chapter 2, note 287 for the reading on the bricks.
335. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 8–9 (lines 29–30): *sarvvapṛthivīvijayajanitodayavyāptanikhilāvanitalām kīrttim itas tridaśapatibhavanagamanāvāptalaeitasukhavicaraṇāṃ ācakṣāṇa iva bhuvo bāhur ayam ucchritaḥ stambhaḥ*. Also see Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 267.
336. Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 141; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 1: 283–84 (lines 3–4). Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981): 259 (text) but his comments on p. 57 are specious as he misunderstands the theology of death in the Gupta period. Bhandarkar's views are also rejected by Sircar, ibid. 28, n. 4. The understanding here proven by the Parivrājaka plates in which the king describes his after life, see Fleet, CII 3 (1888): 108 (line 12): *dehāntaragato pi*, "even when I have passed to another physical body (*deha*)."
337. Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, pp. 34–35.
338. Bhandarkar et al., CII 3 (1981), see Chapter 2, note 278 for the text.
339. Skandagupta's low origins are usefully argued in P. L. Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, 1: 330–31 and the issue taken up again in my "Later Gupta History," 131–50.
340. M. C. Joshi and S. K. Gupta, eds. *King Chandra and the Meharauli Pillar* (Meerut, 1989) provides an anthology of published data and interpretations.

## Appendix I. Astronomy and Udayagiri

1. Here following, with slight modification, the translation of Kale, *Mudrārākṣasa*, 2–3.

## Appendix II. Mean Annual Run-off Into the Udayagiri Tank

1. Subsequent to the preparation of this appendix, some aspects of the water-system have been explored in Meera I. Dass, "Water Systems at Udayagiri: A Search for its Meaning," in *Traditional Water Management Systems of India*, edited by Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty et al. (New Delhi, 2006): 34–44.

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